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# SUMMARY OF 1991 DATA USERS MEETINGS

Memphis, Tennessee	-- March 12, 1991
Kansas City, Missouri	-- March 14, 1991
Washington, D.C.	-- March 19, 1991
San Francisco, California	-- April 10, 1991
Chicago, Illinois	-- May 1, 1991

Economic Research Service  
World Agricultural Outlook Board  
National Agricultural Statistics Service  
of the  
United States Department of Agriculture

APR 1 1992  
FEB 7 1992  
NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE  
WASHINGTON, D.C.



**United States  
Department of  
Agriculture**



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## FOREWORD

*This report summarizes discussions at five Data Users Meetings held in March, April, and May 1991 to discuss USDA economic statistics programs. Also included are written statements which were provided by meeting participants or by individuals who were unable to attend.*

*Listening meetings have been held nearly every year since 1978 by agencies under the Assistant Secretary for Economics. These meetings have identified a number of improvements which have been incorporated into the ongoing reports and research program.*

*The 1991 meetings focused on the NASS field crop production forecasts and production and stocks reports, ERS situation and outlook reports, and WAOB supply and demand estimates.*

*The material presented in this report is a summary of the major points presented at each session. No attempt was made to capture verbatim comments. All answers and subsequent discussion based on remarks by a particular speaker are shown by indentations.*



## INTRODUCTION

On behalf of the Economics Agencies of USDA, I want to welcome you to today's Data Users Meeting. This is the fifth year for this type of meeting.

Before 1987, the Economic Agencies occasionally held "listening" meetings where data users were asked to comment on programs and reports of the Agencies. While those listening meetings served a good purpose, it was apparent that many users were confused about responsibilities of USDA Agencies for different reports. There were also misconceptions about the survey and analysis procedures used by the Agencies. Further, the listening format did not provide a good forum for announcing and explaining new procedures or data series.

A new meeting format was developed and used for the first time in 1987. The first part of each meeting was reserved for explanation of the program of reports, data collection and analysis procedures, and program changes. To provide a manageable focus for the presentations, only a defined part of the total information program was covered in the explanation portion. The second part of each meeting was a listening session which covered any topics of interest to the audience.

The first 4-year cycle of data meetings concluded last year. The topics which have been featured were 1987 - Field Crops, 1988 - Livestock, 1989 - Fruit, Vegetables, and Farm Labor, and 1990 - Prices and Economic Statistics. This year will again focus on field crops procedures and reports.

These meetings have been successful in the past. The fact that such meetings are held and that Agency Administrators get out of Washington to listen to data users is helpful in the USDA budget process and in Congressional hearings. The Agencies do get a number of new ideas each year. Some of the suggestions from these meetings have been implemented as changes and improvements to the statistical program of activities and reports.



## NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE OVERVIEW

The purpose of this presentation is to provide a basic overview of the National Agricultural Statistics Service estimating program as it relates to field crops. The basic estimating program has remained unchanged for the past several years. The crop estimating season generally starts with the Prospective Plantings report that is issued in March. An estimate of grain stocks in all positions is also published at the same time. The first forecast of grain production occurs in May with the forecast of winter wheat production. The next major reporting period occurs in June. In late June, a report is issued containing estimates of acres planted for all major crops. Another report in June also shows stocks of grain in all positions. The forecast season for row crop production starts with the August Crop Production report and continues through the crop season. Final production for small grain crops is estimated in early October along with stocks of grains in late September. The next major reporting period is the end-of-season final estimates of acreage yield and production for all crops and again stocks in all positions.

This basic estimating procedure, as has been said before, has been unchanged for several years. However, since 1987, some significant methodological changes have been made in the underlying surveying and estimating procedures used to produce these estimates. The following paragraphs will review these changes and hopefully a better understanding of the current estimating procedures.

### Survey Integration:

The most significant change made in the survey program since 1987 has been to integrate separate surveys into a quarterly agricultural survey program. In the past, several surveys were done independently of each other; for example, the March Acreage Intentions report was based on a survey of farm operators and another separate survey was conducted to obtain stocks of grain in all positions. As we attempted to increase sample sizes and improve the quality of the surveys, it became obvious that it would be necessary to integrate these surveys to minimize respondent burden yet increase effective sample sizes. For example, in a given midwestern State, we may have been interviewing 2,000 people to determine prospective plantings, 2,000 people to obtain stocks on farms, and another 2,000 people to obtain hogs and pigs inventory. By integrating the samples for all of these surveys into one sample and obtaining all questions when we interview farm operators, we can in effect, interview only about 3,500 people and obtain all of the information we need much more accurately. This has increased the effective sample size for all items, yet reduced the total number of people who needed to be interviewed. These integrated surveys are conducted in June, September, December, and March.

The largest integrated survey is conducted in the first 2 weeks in June. During these 2 weeks we will interview about 75,000 farmers across the United States that were selected at random from a list of names and addresses of farm operators. Each State office is responsible for maintaining a list of all farm operators. These lists contain measures of size for hogs, cattle, sheep, crop acreage, and stocks. The lists are divided into size group strata and a random sample is selected from each stratum. The larger the operation, the greater its chance of being



## NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE OVERVIEW

(Continued)

selected. During the first 2 weeks in June, another survey is conducted using an area sampling frame. The entire land mass of the United States has been mapped using aerial photography and satellite imagery. The classification of land by agricultural density is delineated on the photography. Using a random selection procedure, about 15,500 segments of land are selected at random from each land use classification. Interviewers trained in interviewing skills locate these area segments and interview all farm operators who operate land within those segments. This area frame survey will involve interviewing about 55,000 farm operators. This means that during the first 2 weeks of June, in total, NASS will have interviewed almost 130,000 farm operators.

This makes the June estimates of acres planted, stocks, and hogs estimates probably the most accurate that NASS is able to produce. If resources allowed, we might repeat this survey quarterly throughout the year. Resources do not allow that, so the integrated surveys conducted in September, December, and March are based on subsamples and some sample rotation of the survey conducted in June. In total, about 75,000 farms are interviewed during each of the subsequent quarterly surveys. The reference date for these surveys is the 1st of the month, i.e., June 1, September 1, etc. Whether the interview is conducted on June 1 or June 10, the respondent is asked to report livestock inventories and stocks in storage as of June 1. Crop acreages and production data are reported as of the time of the interview.

### Yield Forecasts:

Two basic methodologies are used to forecast yield per acre for wheat, corn, soybeans, cotton, and rice in major producing States. In major producing States, we conduct objective measurement surveys that involve selecting a random sample of fields from farms interviewed during the quarterly surveys. Interviewers find these fields, enter them at a prescribed corner, walk a designated number of rows along the field and a random number of paces into the field, and lay out small plots. Within two plots in each field, enumerators obtain counts of number of plants, whether it be corn stalks or soybean plants, and count the number of fruit such as wheat heads, bolls, ears of corn, etc. These plant and fruit counts, along with weight of fruit information later in the growing season, form one basis for forecasting crop yields.

Another source for the yield forecasts comes from surveys conducted of farm operators where they are asked to report the probable yield for their farm. Samples are selected from people reporting those crops on the quarterly surveys, either in March or June. A significant change has been made in how we obtain information from farm operators about the expected yields. The previous procedure involved maintaining panels of farm operators who would report for their locality. These panels did not represent a random sample, rather they represented people who were willing to report and were knowledgeable of their area. They were generally asked to report the condition of the crops in their area and the probable yield per acre for the crop in their locality. The new methodology involves selecting a sample of farm operators based on the size of their operation. They are asked to report the acres to be harvested from their operation and the expected yield per acre from the acres in their farm. This will improve the quality of the yield forecast in that it will more adequately represent all sizes of operations.



## NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE OVERVIEW

(Continued)

We started phasing in the use of this new methodology in 1984. By 1991, all States will be using the new yield survey to measure crop yields.

Some additional things will be added to the estimating program in 1991. The August Crop Production report will contain acreage estimates of dry beans by class. The 1990 Farm Bill contains some provisions about minor oilseeds. We will start collecting data on acreage, yield, and production of minor oilseeds such as canola, rapeseed, safflower, and mustardseed. We plan to publish statistics on these crops in the Annual Crop Production report in January 1992.

Another new source of data is a result of the Department's Water Quality and Food Safety Initiatives. NASS has the responsibility to produce statistics on agricultural chemical usage. March 20, a report was released showing statistics on usage of fertilizers and herbicides, pesticides, and fungicides on field crops. This report contained information on acreage treated, application rates, and number of times treated. In June of this year, another report will be released that shows chemical usage for vegetable crops. Again, this will show the product used, acreage treated, application rates, and number of times treated.



## WORLD AGRICULTURAL OUTLOOK BOARD OVERVIEW

I very much appreciate the opportunity to talk with you today. I will spend about 15 minutes on an overview of what the World Board is about and then I will turn to the Board's Grains Analyst for a closer look at USDA's commodity supply and demand estimates.

Let me say from the start that we are a small Agency; so, we have to work with and depend on other Agencies to get our job done of coordinating and improving the Department's outlook work. We are directly responsible for only one publication -- the monthly World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates report -- and we participate in the preparation of one other report -- the Weekly Weather and Crop Bulletin.

### Goals of USDA's Outlook Information System:

The Board is charged with coordinating and improving USDA's outlook work.

There are at least three goals underlying our effort:

#### Objectivity.

- Our aim is to provide unbiased information.
- The Board has no responsibility for the operation of USDA programs; so, we have no vested interest in biasing estimates to make programs look good.
- The Board Chairperson is a career service employee of the Department.

#### Reliability.

- It is not enough to be objective and unbiased.
- An information system must be supported by sound data and a strong analytical framework.
- The Board is responsible for monitoring estimates and recommending methods for improvement.

#### Timeliness.

- It doesn't matter if information is objective and reliable if it doesn't get to decision makers on a timely basis.
- The Board explores ways to improve the flow of information to users both within and outside the Department.

### Supply-Demand Equation:

Let's now examine how the Department puts together various pieces of information about world and U.S. supply and use of commodities. We are trying to identify and explain fundamental causes of market change. We call the set of information for each commodity a supply-demand equation or a balance sheet. A change in one component of the balance sheet causes an imbalance and other components have to be changed.

For example, if we increase production, this means we have to increase total supply--and it could mean we would have to raise projected ending stocks if use estimates are not changed--or if we raise use estimates to match the production increase, then the estimate of stocks would not change. We publish balance sheets each month for grains, soybeans, cotton, and livestock.

## WORLD AGRICULTURAL OUTLOOK BOARD OVERVIEW

(Continued)

There are two distinct types of estimates in a supply-demand balance sheet:

On the supply side, NASS makes forecasts of crop production for the United States and the World Board oversees the interagency development of estimates for other major countries and crops around the world.

There is one important difference in approaches to U.S. crop production forecasts and foreign crop estimates:

- NASS production forecasts are based on surveys of farmers and of crops, while the interagency estimates for many foreign countries involve a lot more judgement.

### USDA'S Economic Intelligence System: Sources of Information for Global Estimates:

The following summarizes the sources of information that the Department calls on in putting together foreign crop production and use estimates.

There are regular reports that Attaches send to Washington as a part of their reporting requirements on commodity production, consumption, and trade -- these reports cover 95 countries; and for many countries, revisions are made each month. The reports from the Attaches also cover economic and policy developments abroad.

There also are reports from travel, either from Washington or the embassy officials, if additional information is needed for a commodity or a country. There are other information sources, like official reports from other countries and weather information.

### USDA'S Economic Intelligence System: Board Functions:

Let's move now to how the Department's economic intelligence work is organized. It is the job of the World Agricultural Outlook Board to work with other Agencies of the Department and put together estimates. This work is done through formal Interagency Committees that are chaired by the Board. These committees develop official USDA supply and demand estimates. The Board reviews and clears all publications of the Department relating to outlook. The Board is in charge of the Department's global assessments of weather's impact on yields. The Board also coordinates the Department's work on climate and remote sensing.

### USDA'S Economic Intelligence System: Agency Functions:

Several primary Agencies are involved in the interagency estimates process and Agency responsibilities. Let's start with NASS. NASS estimates U.S. crop production and stocks. The Interagency Committees couldn't add up world wheat production without the NASS data for the United States -- NASS' production and stocks data are needed to do a wheat balance sheet. The Foreign Agricultural Service is the Department's prime source for commodity information and market developments in foreign countries. The Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service provides a great deal of information related to farm programs and their



## WORLD AGRICULTURAL OUTLOOK BOARD OVERVIEW

(Continued)

influence on U.S. crop production. The Economic Research Service is the analytical Agency of the Department and provides basic analysis of world and U.S. supply and demand conditions, including country and regional analysis. Finally, there is the Joint Agricultural Weather Facility.

### The Joint Agricultural Weather Facility:

The Joint Agricultural Weather Facility (JAWF) is staffed jointly by the World Board and the National Weather Service.

JAWF is supervised by an Agricultural Meteorologist with the Board. The National Weather Service provides JAWF with weather information which includes daily numbers on precipitation and temperature from 8,000 weather stations around the world and satellite imagery and weather charts which show weather features like cloud cover and movement of fronts.

JAWF is constantly on alert for weather developments around the world that will impact foreign commodity production.

JAWF monitors weather data to keep track of conditions in key countries around the world. Weather's estimated impact on yield is a key basis for monthly revisions of USDA's foreign crop production estimates. JAWF furnishes international weather information for the Weekly Weather and Crop Bulletin.

### March Lockup:

There is one day each month when all the weather and crop information is brought together and USDA issues new world and U.S. supply and demand estimates.

That is on lockup day and that day coincides with the issuance of NASS Crop Production reports. I don't want to give the impression that we look at weather and crop information and decide on crop production for 95 different countries on lockup day. There is no way we can do that, so we do much of our interagency work in pre-lockup meetings -- but let me assure you all decisions are finalized in lockup. Here is our agenda for the March 11 lockup. Note that we mainly covered countries in the Southern Hemisphere where crop development ranges from still growing to harvesting. You can also see that we first finalize production estimates so we can complete supply and use balance sheets. As soon as NASS completes U.S. crop production forecast inside lockup, these are incorporated into our global and U.S. supply and use estimates.

## ECONOMIC RESEARCH SERVICE OVERVIEW

General comments about the Economic Research Service (ERS) will be followed by highlights of the Situation and Outlook Program.

The mission of the ERS is to provide economic and other social science information and analysis for improving the performance of agriculture and rural America. This indicates that we are a service organization and do not have a particular program to administer and or promote; which means that our research is unbiased. We recently had an anniversary celebration and the theme was 30 years of service. So, we are proud of that tradition.

While the ERS is quite young, its roots go back the first outlook conference in 1923. This was obviously well received since they have continued since that time.

The areas or topics of expertise have proliferated over the years. We currently have four program divisions to carry on the work:

- Commodity Economics Division - CED
  - Commodity Supply, Demand and Price Analysis
  - Commodity Programs and Policy Impacts
  - Industry Structure and Performance Research
- Agriculture and Trade Analysis Division - ATAD
  - International Agriculture
  - Foreign Country/Regions Analysis
  - Trade Liberalization
- Resources and Technology Division - RTD
  - Agricultural Resources and Technologies
  - Water Quality
  - Food Safety Issues
- Agricultural and Rural Economy Division - ARED
  - Rural Development Issues
  - Farm Income
  - Farm Costs and Returns

The four program divisions carry out four principal functions.

Situation and Outlook - Analyzes the current situation and forecasts the short-term outlook for major agricultural commodities.

Research - Analysis of economic topics ranging from costs and returns to agriculture production and marketing to effects of government policy and programs.

Staff Analysis - Entails assessments of issues requiring policy decisions by the administration and Congress.

Economic and Statistical Indicators - Provides knowledge and data base for the above activities.



## ECONOMIC RESEARCH SERVICE OVERVIEW

(Continued)

Highlights of the Situation and Outlook (S&O) program will include the objective or definition of Situation and Outlook, components or parts of the program, and products including publication resulting from this activity.

The S&O program is comprehensive and includes a number of commodities. The entire Agency is involved and each of the ERS divisions has S&O responsibilities. Also, our program has analysts who can go into considerable detail about individual commodities.

The definition which best describes the purpose of S&O is that it provides economic information and analysis for improving the performance of agriculture. This includes agriculture in the broadest sense which covers marketing as well as production.

S&O information is unique. Our niche in the full spectrum of forecast time periods is to provide quarterly and annual supply and utilization data. This is mainly due to availability of data. Also, these forecast horizons fit the forecasting process for farm income and food prices. We do not have the people power to focus on daily or weekly analysis.

Also, forecasts are for the entire U.S. and not localized regions. Many markets such as livestock are U.S. wide. Also, local prices should fluctuate the same as national prices and consequently national price forecasts should be helpful.

One of the strong positive aspects of our reports is that we provide official benchmark supply and utilization data. These include all the revisions and are major sources of explanations of developments and trends.

A considerable amount of time is spent providing information for public decision makers. These include the Assistant Secretary for Economics and the Office of the Secretary. We work with other Agencies such as the Foreign Agricultural Service to appraise meat import quotas. Also, information is provided to other Agencies such as the International Trade Commission.

Private decision makers served by our program are: input suppliers, marketing agencies, and food processors. We provide most information to farmers through extension agents, farm magazines, and newspapers.

An examination of the components of the program shows the comprehensiveness of the program. All good economic research clearly states the assumptions underpinning the analyses. We are fortunate to have in-house experts who regularly provide analysis of general U.S. business conditions. Also, we have specialists covering economic activity in the world and exchange rates which is helpful for analyzing world trade. In addition, we have country specialists, such as for Russia and China, who help those analyzing world grain trade.

Community analysts need to have a thorough understanding of farm programs. This is especially true this year with the new Farm Bill. Weather has a tremendous impact on agriculture and we rely on the World Board to keep us up-to-date on U.S. and world temperature and moisture conditions.

## ECONOMIC RESEARCH SERVICE OVERVIEW

(Continued)

The crops we analyze are the major program crops and some specialty ones. We have analysts working on wheat, feed grains (corn, sorghum, barley, and oats,) oilseeds (soybeans, sunflowers, peanuts, etc.,) rice, cotton, and specialty crops (tobacco, sugar, fruit, vegetables, and tree nuts.)

Livestock that are analyzed are cattle, hogs, sheep, chickens, and turkeys. Livestock products include dairy items and eggs.

Analysis of individual commodities feed into or are utilized to forecast U.S. agricultural trade, farm income, and food prices. ERS has a monopoly on the last two items. Of course, when the forecast is off the mark for these items one has a lot of explaining to do.

We publish a number of reports and most of these deal with commodities. Our crop reports covering program crops are wheat, feed, rice, oil crops, tobacco, and sugar. Other crop reports are fruit and tree nuts, vegetables, and specialties. Livestock reports are livestock and poultry, dairy, and aquaculture. Given the individual importance of livestock categories, six livestock and poultry reports are published each year and statistical yearbooks are separate.

Special reports are agricultural income and finance, farm, inputs, land values, cropland, water, and conservation and agricultural exports. These reports are published less frequently than commodity reports.

World agricultural regional reports include China, USSR, Western Europe, Pacific Rim, and developing countries. *This last category was previously designated as less developed countries.*

Special magazines are produced by the Situation and Outlook Coordination Staff (SOCS). The Agricultural Outlook (AO) is published 11 times a year. If there is late breaking commodity news, it can be included in the AO. Incidentally, this report has the largest circulation in ERS--about 2,500 paid subscriptions. Another special magazine produced by SOCS is the Food Review which was previously called the National Food Review.

We have two monthly 4-page reports. One is the Livestock and Poultry Update and the other is U.S. Agricultural Trade Update. These reports were developed to answer frequently asked questions.

Summaries of S&O reports and reports themselves are available for a short time on the Computerized Information Delivery System (CIDS), Martin Marietta computer in Orlando, Florida. Many USDA Agencies use this system.

While CIDS provides short-term data included in current reports, long-term data bases for a number of subjects are available from ERS. These are on disks in a Lotus 1-2-3 format.

A new endeavor of Situation and Outlook or one that has been revived is international technical assistance. ERS currently has contacts with Egypt and Taiwan. Efforts are being made to develop S&O programs for Poland and other Eastern Europe countries.

In summary, I want to indicate that there are a number of situation and outlook reports available for your use.



**DATA USERS MEETINGS**  
**Memphis, Tennessee**  
**March 12, 1991**

**GENERAL SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS**

**J. Kevin Brown - Soil Conservation Service**

What methodology will be used for the Agricultural Chemicals Usage report?

**Rich Allen - National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS)**

For the report on field crops to be issued March 20, the data came from cropping practices interviews in conjunction with objective yield survey interviews of farmers. Some data have been published from these interviews in the past such as percent of acres being fertilized or receiving herbicides, but application rates were never published. The number of States for corn data was expanded to 47 last year by drawing samples in States that normally don't have objective yield surveys. For cotton, data will be available for only the 6 States in the normal objective yield program, and the only data will be for fertilizer and herbicides.

**Dean Ethridge - Sparks Commodities, Inc.**

How suitable will the new NASS methodology be for measuring changes in crops because of new farm program flexibility provisions?

**John Witzig - NASS**

Having the new sampling procedures in place, which focus on representative samples each year rather than the old panel survey approach, will allow NASS to measure major crop changes as they occur. However, changes in minor oilseed acreage will still be difficult. Measuring estimates of minor oilseeds in 1991 will not be available until the end of the season.

**Buddy Sanders - Shelby County Extension Service**

Why doesn't NASS use processor data for crops such as canola? He doesn't feel that many producers will plant without a contract in place.

**John Witzig - NASS**

Our offices do review all sources of information such as processors, shippers, seed sellers, etc., to build up grower lists for future surveys and as administrative data for verifying production levels.

**David Brandon - Shearson Lehman Brothers**

How many cotton farms will be included in the 75,000 contacts on a quarterly agricultural survey?

**Fred Vogel - NASS**

He doesn't have an estimate at hand. However, because of the stratification scheme which will put large cotton farms in strata which are selected with high priority, there will be a higher proportion of cotton farms in the sample than are represented in the population as a whole and the percentage of cotton acres in the sample will be even higher than the percentage of cotton farms.

**Randy Griggs - Alabama Peanut Processors Association**

He attended the 1987 meeting in Memphis and had a number of questions and concerns at that time. He can now testify that these meetings can be very helpful. After the 1987 meeting, NASS did have specialists met with a peanut industry committee to review procedures and instructions for the monthly peanut stocks report. There was then a series of information meetings across the peanut States to inform the individuals filling out forms how to properly report. In some cases double reporting had occurred because central offices and subsidiaries both reported. The industry also helped NASS update its mailing list for complete coverage. He would now encourage ERS to work with the peanut industry to consider ways that analyses could be improved.

**Hosea Harkness - Sparks Commodities, Inc.**

As usual, he has a full load of questions and requests. First, he would go on record as reminding NASS that a task force reviewing the Agency publications several years ago recommended that more components of the objective yield program should be published. Some data such as plant population and row widths are still being published but he has not seen an expansion.

**John Witzig - NASS**

He agrees that the Agency has not expanded publication so far. The data in the Ag. Chemical report next week will be the first change in quite a while. When Fred Vogel came to Estimates Division this last year, he identified publication of objective yield components as a priority. Crops Branch will review and recommend data that can be published in upcoming Crop Production reports.

**Hosea Harkness - Sparks Commodities**

He is hopeful that NASS will switch to a meaningful oats planted for grain harvest basis. The figure published in the January intentions survey seemed to imply that farmers would actually harvest all acres planted for grain as grain and that won't happen.

**John Witzig - NASS**

He wonders if data users would accept dropping the oats planted acreage series completely and shifting only to a planted for grain harvest basis. The approach used last March was to ask for total planted acres, then ask for how many of those acres were expected to be harvested for grain. The resultant indication seemed quite good. In January, NASS asked only an oats acreage planted for harvest as grain question which may not have been effective.



**Hosea Harkness - Sparks Commodities, Inc.**

He has been looking closely at sunflower expectations for this year and thinks that NASS should consider adding 2 or 3 States for State estimates this year.

**Charles Caudill - NASS**

He knows that a number of people are expecting a big increase in sunflower in at least 2 States and he has answered a number of questions and letters in response to a letter writing campaign to some Congressmen. Nebraska and Colorado were the two States mentioned most often. What other State did Hosea have in mind?

**Hosea Harkness - Sparks Commodities, Inc.**

South Dakota might also have a big increase.

For his company's analysis, he finds that mid-month ginnings data are very helpful. He hopes that NASS finds some way to continue the whole program. Also, would NASS pick up reports as of October 1991 or with the 1992 crop year?

**Charles Caudill - NASS**

Based on the President's budget, the changeover would be October 1991 but budgets often are not in place by October 1. However, under the President's budget, Commerce clearly would have no money for ginnings as of October 1. The worse thing that could happen would be if Commerce did not do August and September of 1991 since their authority would run out October 1.

**Hosea Harkness - Sparks Commodities, Inc.**

He would like to make a comment to this assembled group. His job has led him to travel widely around the world. Regardless of all his questions and suggestions for improvement, the U.S. system is the best in the world.

**Estel Hudson - University of Tennessee Ag. Extension Service**

He uses a lot of USDA crop and livestock data in farm management schools. The data are very helpful but farmers are looking for information on "when to pull the trigger." He would like even more such information from ERS.

**Buddy Sanders - Shelby County Extension Service**

He is in an unusual position of being in an urban county which still has 20,000 acres of cotton. He appreciates all of the service from Ron Brantner of the Tennessee Agricultural Statistics Service. He is particularly anxious today to know what will be in the Ag. Chemical report. He is concerned that a figure such as "540 million tons of chemicals were applied" will seem like too much to people in urban areas and may be harmful to farmers' interests.

**Fred Vogel - NASS**

Yes, there is the danger of misuse since people can add up components in the report to a total tonnage. However, the report will be set up to emphasize percentage of acreage with applications. The report should actually counter misinformation that may have occurred in the past where a person has assumed that each farmer applied each of the approved herbicides for a crop and applied each at the maximum rate.

**Buddy Sanders - Shelby County Extension Service**

People who are the heaviest users of data need data at more micro levels such as counties. Ron Brantner keeps explaining why he can't create more county estimates but they are really needed for areas like floriculture and horticulture.

**Charles Caudill - NASS**

The NASS budget is set up to provide U.S. and State level estimates and forecasts. Any lower level breakouts have required specific funding from other U.S. Government agencies, State Government, or from industry groups. We know more data are needed--in each crop disaster year ASCS probably makes overpayments due to inadequate data that are larger than the cost of a good county estimates program. NASS has submitted estimates of the costs of more county estimates that would be needed if permanent disaster legislation were adopted.

In the 1992 President's budget, Office of Management & Budget (OMB) has included \$1 million for specialty commodities (restoring some vegetables statistics and fruit tree inventories). NASS has not been successful in getting funding through for horticultural specialties. Floriculture has been funded by Congress due to intense lobbying by the industry. Some States have done horticultural specialty surveys based on state funding such as in New Jersey. The New Jersey survey was helpful to the industry in getting water priorities during a drought.

**Donald Frahm - Sparks Commodities, Inc.**

His specialty is grains analysis so he uses all situation and outlook, supply and demand, and grain stocks information. He definitely feels that grain stocks data are not what they used to be. Quarterly patterns seemed to have changed about the time of the implementation of the new marketing year definition and shifts of quarterly dates (to December, March, June, September). Stocks early in the season seem to be lower than before with larger unexplained residuals. We seem to "find" some of the residual later in the year so end up at about the same place as before. His questions are: 1) Has something changed in the estimation procedures? 2) Is NASS looking at what may be causing changes? and 3) If NASS makes any changes in the future, can data users be informed?

**John Witzig - NASS**

He does agree that some relationships have changed. The only procedural change is that the December 1 date allows review of end-of-season production data and December stocks at the same time which is a consistency improvement. Assuming that the main concerns are with corn, he agrees there seems to be larger variation in quarter-to-quarter relationships but feels that analysts should still focus most heavily on the full marketing year relationships.

**Charles Caudill - NASS**

He wanted to point out that the Agency has implemented a program of follow-up personal visits to verify data collected by telephone and see if reporting is consistent.



**Rich Allen - NASS**

The only conspicuous change that the Ag. Statistics Board has made in stocks estimates is to adopt a more reasonable level of residual for soybeans at the end of the year. In Canada, the Statistics Canada approach is to force all series (crops and livestock) to a zero residual. NASS does not believe that a zero residual approach is reasonable and found that historic residual levels of about 1 percent of total supply were probably too tight. (Shrinkage itself may account for that much residual.)

**Dean Ethridge - Sparks Commodities, Inc.**

He has a comment on the cotton ginnings and then has a couple of questions. In his review he has always felt that the mid-month ginnings are most critical late in the season, followed by their value early in the season, and the lowest value being in the middle of the season.

Allen Johnson mentioned the new commodities yearbooks that ERS creates as part of the Situation and Outlook process. There used to be a report on all information related to cotton which was discontinued and then replaced by the yearbook. Has ERS left out some available data? He thinks the yearbook should be at least a quarter inch thicker.

**Mack Leath - Economic Research Service (ERS)**

He would have to go back to all former and present data listings to check but he thinks that all presently available data are being captured. Some data may no longer be available from the Bureau of the Census or other sources.

**Dean Ethridge - Sparks Commodities, Inc.**

He has some related questions for Jim Donald or Russ Barlowe. How much focus is given to minor cotton countries? Does everything depend on Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS)? How are the minor countries rectified in the Board process?

**Russ Barlowe - World Agricultural Outlook Board (WAOB)**

The Board does spend most time on the major countries. There is often sketchy information for the smaller countries. For example, the African countries are getting more important but FAS has an attache in only one of the countries (Ivory Coast). The Board then depends more on Interagency Committee members information such as travel reports or other contacts.

**Jim Donald - WAOB**

ERS does spend a lot of time on some of the smaller countries through the Agency for International Development (AID) and other contacts which they can bring into the Committee meetings.

**Mark Lange - National Cotton Council**

First he wanted to compliment NASS on the speed of responses to questions. The discussion earlier on changes due to flexibility ties into the comments on the need for disaggregate data. Flexibility will make county data even more important.

As far as the Ag. Chemical survey, the data will be again at the State level but the concerns will be for levels of applications in concentrated areas. Will the March 20 data come from the big survey last June?

**Rich Allen - NASS**

All of the data in the March 20 publication come from the cropping practices data obtained from the objective yield survey. Most of the objective yield survey samples for spring planted crops come from the June area frame survey with data collection starting in late July. The 1990 cotton data on herbicides were collected before harvest. To expand to collecting insecticide and defoliant data may require an interview about harvest time. In that case, preliminary data might not be available for the USDA Outlook Conference in late November.

**Charles Caudill - NASS**

The only source of disaggregate data might be from the mandatory reporting data in California. However, the California law does not require reporting of fertilizer data so NASS will collect that on a sample basis and only State estimates will be made. California illustrates that disaggregate data are not cheap; the State cost is something like \$16 million per year to summarize the monthly reported data.

**Rich Allen - NASS**

The one possible source of some disaggregate data will be from special small area studies. NASS worked with the Environmental Protection Agency to collect pesticide data in support of a well testing project in the Delmarva area. ERS hopes to fund small area projects this year in Nebraska, Pennsylvania, Washington, and Indiana. These will be multi-county areas which will be indicators of possible conditions in other similar producing areas.

**Mark Lange - National Cotton Council**

There may be some new international agreements coming from the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) talks. Who will do the analyses within USDA on agricultural support levels in various countries?

**Tony Grano - ERS**

Two agencies are involved, and have been involved, within USDA. ERS does a number of analyses which are submitted through Assistant Secretary Bruce Gardner. FAS is also collecting information which is funneled through Under Secretary Dick Crowder. All USDA information is shared with the United States Trade Representative. Not much is published due to the extreme sensitivity of the GATT.

**Surendra Singh - Tennessee State University**

In small Universities, individuals get involved in many subjects. He appreciates data that he has gotten from Ron Brantner. His University is now focusing more on nursery crops. He obtained all available data from Ron Brantner and from Doyle Johnson of ERS. However, is there any source of horticulture data by counties?



**Charles Caudill - NASS**

The only possible consistent source is the Census of Horticulture which was collected with a 1988 reference date. Congress authorized the money to collect the data but wanted the industry to fund the publication. That didn't happen and the Bureau of the Census has been trying to squeeze out the publication. It may be out later this year.

**Jess Barr - National Cotton Council**

He strongly supports publishing twice a month cotton ginnings data. He has appreciated all of the information on the funding situation from NASS and the Bureau of the Census. The National Cotton Council is trying to get the money back to the Bureau of the Census and get the whole former amount. Don't be fooled that the Bureau of the Census will gear up to do August and September if they lose the authority as of October 1.

How will ERS interpret and integrate the quarterly data from the Bureau of the Census into situation and outlook? Also, how will ending cotton stocks be determined?

**Mack Leath - ERS**

It appears that there will not be any supplemental data to break out the new quarterly series.

**Russ Barlowe - WAOB**

He feels that the previous seasonal patterns may be helpful in approximating monthly data from the quarterly. He understands that there will be an ending stocks figure from the Bureau of the Census, but it is not clear how timely it will be.

**Jess Barr - National Cotton Council**

His contacts indicate that the Bureau of the Census will not create anything special like the ending stocks. They are taking a tough line hoping someone will provide the extra funding to restore monthly data.

Most ERS publications are timely but not for the economic indicators. For instance, 1989 cost of production data are still not available. Why does it take so long for some of those data?

**Bob McElroy - ERS**

There are several factors in the past 2 years which have delayed some publications. Farm income estimates have been delayed because of revisions back to the 1987 Census of Agriculture. New models have been developed for cost of production data and there were some new data collected to run through those models. Currently, publication has been held up by some snags in the editorial process.

In the future, much of the cost of production data will be issued as staff reports rather than going through the economic indicators editorial process; publication consists largely of tables and little narrative. Also, very few cost of production State budgets will be published in the future due to data quality concerns. For the 1990 cost of

production data now being collected from NASS, summarized data will be available by summer to run through the calculation models and publication will be about a year from the start of data collection.

**Mark Lange - National Cotton Council**

He thought the new Farm Bill required more publication of COPS data.

**Bob McElroy - ERS**

Yes, there will be more data published but not the State level budgets. There is not enough staffing and budget to create all of State level budgets, besides the data quality concerns.

**Keth Henley - Cotton Outlook**

Like everyone else he is not going to suggest data series to drop. Instead he has suggestions for small improvements to existing series. The Bureau of the Census recently started issuing average bale weight at the end of the season instead of monthly. Would NASS reinstate the monthly data if they take over ginnings?

**Charles Caudill - NASS**

He is not familiar with the Bureau of the Census decision but if the within season data are of good quality, he doesn't see why the average bale weight couldn't be published.

**Keth Henley - Cotton Outlook**

He would like someone to pass a question on to the FAS. The weekly export sales report identifies the countries to which cotton is being sold but, except for some broad staple length categories, doesn't identify where it was produced or the quality. This year if exports are going to be at near record highs there may be some shortages on some qualities and from some producing areas. Could FAS issue information on where cotton for export was produced (perhaps by redesigning the reporting form)?

**Russ Barlowe - WAOB**

He will pass the question on to the FAS.

**Brian Robinson - Riceland Foods, Inc.**

His review and contacts in Arkansas lead him to think that the Arkansas 1990 soybean production may have been overestimated by as much as 10 percent. He doesn't seem to be able to find the extra bushels. Also, what consideration has been given to the requirement for calculating a world soybean price?

**Jim Donald - WAOB**

He knows one of the USDA committees has been studying the world price but doesn't know of the status. He will check on it.

**John Witzig - NASS**

Arkansas did present a difficult forecasting and estimating problem in 1990 with the wet conditions, late plantings, and late blooming. However, he has not been getting any inquiries on the Arkansas end of season estimates.



**Randell Smith - Riceland Foods, Inc.**

He thinks that the 1990 rice estimates for Arkansas may also be high. He sent a letter to Randy Weber in ASCS and since that letter somehow became "public" he would like to discuss his opinions. He calculates a quarterly balance sheet on a rough rice basis and derives indicated stocks and residual. The residual has increased greatly in the last 2 years. He feels that the reported rice millings are basically correct (or are at least consistently reported for the past several years) and the exports from the Bureau of the Census must be accepted. Thus, he feels the rise in residual must be coming from production being estimated too high and, if so, for Arkansas.

**John Witzig - NASS**

NASS has been concerned with the residual level the past 2 years. We do include a balance sheet in each rice stocks report to make it clear that we are reviewing disappearance data as well as survey indications. We did have problems with higher residuals back in the early 1980's which were due to reporting problems on stocks from some of the industry. He would be glad to sit down with Randell and discuss each estimate.

**Rich Allen - NASS**

The reporting problems in the early 1980's on stocks and prices were so severe that USDA came close to discontinuing statistics. Meetings between the industry and USDA staffers resulting on specific arrangements on pricing and helped to improve reporting on other data series.

**Bill Walker - Agricenter International**

He wanted to welcome all of the out of town visitors. He also emphasized how many uses he has found for NASS data over time. A few years ago, he discussed with Jim Donald the possibility of sharing the USDA Outlook Conference with facilities around the country such as Agricenter International. That would mean a satellite uplink from USDA with a downlink at his facility. This year that will probably become a reality. There may even be the possibility of calling in questions.

**Jim Donald - WAOB**

He thanked Mr. Walker for his interest and foresight in televising USDA's Outlook Conference and looked forward to future cooperation.

**Foy Campbell - Delta & Pine Land Company**

He has been a forage agronomist for many years and in the forage seed business with his company. He also is representing the American Forage & Grassland Council. His company and the Council do use all available Government data but he has a rhetorical question for this audience. What would you do and how would you proceed if you had no statistics? That is the situation with forage. They know trainloads of rye grass and other seeds came from the Pacific Northwest to Alabama but there are no data on seedings. Sometimes he even tries to derive data "by the backdoor" by using changes in cattle inventories, etc. The Council has been very active with Congress trying to get funding. One of the points they make is that the Conservation Reserve Program could have been implemented more smoothly, and without runup of seed prices, if data had been available on present forage acreage and seed supplies.

**Trent Roberts - Arkansas Soybean Association**

He applauds the efforts to include new data on minor oilseeds. How will USDA handle the county posted price provision?

**Charles Caudill - NASS**

The posted county price will be calculated by ASCS. However, it might be only after the season when NASS has calculated the season average price.

**Trent Roberts - Arkansas Soybean Association**

Will the NASS surveys of Ag. Chemicals be used for enforcement?

**Charles Caudill - NASS**

The Farm Bill did require mandatory recordkeeping for restricted pesticides. NASS will not be involved in the enforcement aspect of that law but will be charged with doing surveys to estimate amounts of applications of restricted use pesticides. The OMB allowance in the 1992 President's budget would cover only about one-fourth of the necessary costs, particularly since EPA would like NASS to cover all (farm and nonfarm commercial) applications. The USDA wanted to delete these surveys from the Farm Bill and instead conduct surveys of all chemicals (not just restricted ones) through the food safety/water quality initiatives. NASS will do a pilot study of surveying restricted pesticides in 1992 for national level estimates only, if the money comes through.

**Trent Roberts - Arkansas Soybean Association**

Whenever he sees the monthly Agricultural Prices report he glances at the parity price tables. Only a lug of grapefruit is currently selling at about the parity price level. If parity prices are going to be published how about putting the current costs of production in the next column?

**Charles Caudill - NASS**

We have tried many approaches to get away from publishing parity prices and most recent Assistant Secretaries for Economics have agreed. However, parity is included in some permanent legislation. (If a Farm Bill ever expires the law would revert to a parity concept.) There have been efforts by USDA and the Cost of Production Review Board to develop a parity alternative but nothing has been agreed to.

**Trent Roberts - Arkansas Soybean Association**

He likes the fact that some areas of USDA like Ron Brantner's office are using soybean based ink.

**Hugh Warren - Catfish Farmers of America**

He did participate in the USDA Outlook meetings last year which was the first time that aquaculture had been included. He appreciates the quality of catfish production reporting by USDA. He uses the USDA data in his monthly Catfish Journal report.



**Charles Caudill - NASS**

The catfish statistics reports are examples of success by a commodity organization of getting specific Congressional attention. The monthly report is perhaps the only NASS report in which the respondents are listed, the processors being surveyed wanted to be listed.

**John Van Dyke - USDA/Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)**

He wanted to point out that AMS is starting a data base system for most all of its market news type data. There is a meeting in Des Moines in April as the official kickoff. The data base will be developed for internal AMS use this next year and should be available publicly after that.

**Rich Allen - NASS**

NASS has made good progress in the last year or so with its Published Estimates Data Base. Most commodities have been included with data back to 1866 and county estimates for the past 20 years or so. This has been helpful for answering new adhoc inquiries. Access has been given to a couple individuals at ERS for their testing. No decision has been made on how the data base could be made available to the public.

Another new development is putting some reports on diskettes. A new summary of all NASS labor data has been released and the diskette will be distributed through the ERS-NASS subscription service. The Ag. Chemical Usage report will also be put on a diskette.

**Charles Caudill - NASS**

He is surprised that Hosea Harkness did not bring up his old request to break out weekly weather crop data separately for different areas of Texas. This first came up at the time that the Texas office of NASS lost much of its State funding and we felt we could not add new special publications. There is now a new Commissioner in Texas and hopes of regaining much of the funding.

**Hosea Harkness - Sparks Commodities, Inc.**

Texas is really about 3 different "States" as far as the cotton crop and the separate sets of crop progress data would be very important to analysts

**Charles Caudill - NASS**

He wanted to thank everyone for their participation and input today. These are always helpful sessions.

**Tony Grano - WAOB**

He echoed Charles' comments. He added that he has particularly noted the concerns about the use of Ag. Chemical data. He reiterated that the Economic Agencies will not be involved in regulation and compliance activities.

## **DATA USERS MEETING**

### **Kansas City, Missouri**

### **March 14, 1991**

#### **Maury Brannon - Union Equity**

He has a number of comments from taking a long-term view of what would be important for individual farmers. It probably has not been viewed as the role for the Economic Agencies but farmers are not really getting the advantage of data which could be put together by these Agencies. He thinks that only about 1 in 20 farmers knows what is happening in the current year as far as the pattern of crop marketings. NASS should have the tools to put together and publish estimates of farmer marketings, at least quarterly. Even better would be estimates of monthly marketings by regions. Another important piece of data that NASS might originate is wheat stocks by class in each stocks report. Again, regional data might be sufficient. He later indicated that he realized the on-farm wheat by class data are probably not possible but off-farm on a national level would still be helpful. There are a lot of data available on livestock marketings, but it would be advantageous to expand the crops data.

#### **Bill Edwards - Kansas Farm Bureau**

He echoes Maury's comments about the shortage of information used by individual farmers. Perhaps not even 1 in 10 may even be familiar with the production levels. He finds that the Extension Service personnel vary tremendously in their knowledge. Some do an excellent job but others don't keep up with details.

#### **Richard Rudel - University of Missouri Extension**

He wanted to comment on the issue of providing farmers information from the University of Missouri Extension point of view. "You can lead a horse to water by you can't make him drink." There are a number of the University's information sources available to farmers such as newsletters, bulletin boards, private advisors, etc. The data sources and the information are available but most farmers don't avail themselves of the information. He feels that some large producers may be the only ones who use data directly; most farmers depend on other people to collect the information, tell them what it means, and tell them what to do. Missouri Extension does hold training courses around the State to inform farmers on data sources. Of course, the key for farmers is the ability to analyze correctly, not just to get the data.

#### **J. N. Smith - Southwest Missouri State University**

He has some observations about farmers' use of information. Many depend on sources such as Farm Journal and Successful Farming for their direction. That might be good analysis but it can not be very timely.

#### **John Witzig - NASS**

It may be possible to pick up wheat stocks by classes for off-farm stocks. One major problem with the on-farm stocks would be the available sample size. "Maury, would your company be willing to provide stocks data by class?"



**Maury Brannon - Union Equity**

"Yes, on a national level, not by State or location."

**Jerry Rector - WAOB**

Even the off-farm breakout would be very helpful for analysis and estimating the supply, use, and stocks of wheat by class.

**Bill Edwards - Kansas Farm Bureau**

He has one concern about the Ag. Chemical Usage report. Since there is a potential for some people to misinterpret or misuse the application data, will there be a tendency for farmers to not report? Could that rub off as lower response rates and poorer data for other series?

**Rich Allen - NASS**

The data to be included in the field crops report on March 20 came from the objective yield surveys conducted last year. The data were collected as part of a cropping practices interview and there was not a decrease in response rates.

**John Witzig - NASS**

Most farmers seem to have the attitude that chemical use is less than most misinformed people have estimated. Farmers are interested in having the truth told. It will be important for NASS to always inform farmers on how the data will be reported.

**Rich Allen - NASS**

Some environmentalists have assumed that if four herbicides are approved for a crop each farmer must apply all four of those and apply each at the maximum rate.

**Paul Walsh - NASS, Columbia, Missouri**

His office had the experience last year of conducting a very sensitive survey--one on unauthorized grazing. Refusal rates were somewhat higher than usual but since his office could pledge that all individual reports were confidential, the effect wasn't too great.

**T. J. Byrum - NASS, Topeka, Kansas**

NASS can not always control response burden as much as they would like when new surveys are mandated. However, he doesn't feel that collecting ag. chemical data will be much of a problem. They conducted a special survey last year on corn and soybean chemical use for the Kansas State Department of Agriculture. Response rates were even higher than for the regular quarterly surveys.

**Gary Calfee - Farmers Home Administration**

His Agency uses almost all of the NASS data in administering their loan programs. The data have been of good quality but many things are missing. For example, there are very few vegetables produced in Missouri and there are not existing data on prices. He also has needed data on prices for seed producers. He has filled in the gaps by calling a few seed handlers. However, when he is visited by auditors, he would have preferred to have had a NASS price.

**Paul Walsh - NASS, Columbia, Missouri**

Missouri is an important producer of some seeds, particularly of fescue. However, Federal funding for seeds was cut out in 1982 and he has not been able to attract State funding either.

**Rich Allen - NASS**

NASS has been trying to get initiatives funded for the restoration of a number of specialty crops that had to be cut out in 1982. There is funding for a number of vegetables and fruit tree inventories in the President's 1992 budget. If that was approved, one remaining portion of the specialty crops program to pursue would include seeds.

**Paul Walsh - NASS**

Another need for specialty commodity information is because of the interest in alternative agriculture.

**Gary Calfee - Farmers Home Administration**

Speaking of alternative agriculture, what is the status of aquaculture information?

**John Witzig - NASS**

The schedule is shown in the NASS 1991 Catalog of reports. There will be four quarterly Catfish reports covering 17 States and one Trout report.

**J. N. Smith - Southwest Missouri State University**

He wants to follow-up on concerns that he hears from farmers and students. As farms become larger and there are some very integrated operations, how are the large operations represented in samples and how can NASS be sure they are reporting correctly?

**Paul Walsh - NASS, Columbia, Missouri**

The large operations are accounted for from the list sample rather than the area sample. The very biggest operations are chosen with certainty for major surveys. His office also concentrates on building lists of hog and poultry contractees so operations are not duplicated.

**John Witzig - NASS**

NASS has always depended upon voluntary reporting. However, as operations have gotten bigger, there is some consideration to seeking some mandatory reporting authority. That would require new legislation and there are no plans to proceed right now. It would particularly be considered for off-farm grain stocks and grain prices.

**Rich Allen - NASS**

Our offices do work closely with large operations to determine who has the information we need and who is authorized to report. We can then match the data for an operation with its earlier reports. If there are inconsistencies, we often find it is due to a new bookkeeper for a company and we have a new education job to do.



**J. N. Smith - Southwest Missouri State University**

When a report comes out with a price forecast such as \$2.25-\$2.45, providing a range is not helpful to individual farmers. Can it be fine-tuned in some fashion?

**Jim Donald - WAOB**

At one time, no price projections were included in the Supply and Demand reports. Then a confidence range was published for each element of the supply and use estimates. As the procedures have been improved, the WAOB has gone to point estimates rather than ranges for other items and added the price projections. He thinks that many analysts use the midpoints, which do generally match up with the Board's point estimates which are used in the Department's policy and budget work. (The Board is really working from an expected figure which has a plus or minus uncertainty to it.) The GAO and OIG continued to audit and review WAOB reports and encourage more study of reliability of procedures and projections.

**Jerry Rector - WAOB**

One reason that the price ranges are used is that changes in marketing weights among months can cause several cents difference in the weighted average prices from year-to-year even if the reported monthly prices are the same. Thus, the point estimate is a range because of the unknown marketing weights. Added to this is the uncertainty around the supply and use estimates.

**Rich Allen - NASS**

He asked J. N. Smith if the farmers and advisors that he works with use the mid-point of price ranges or do they use one of the end-points.

**J. N. Smith - Southwest Missouri State University**

Some may take the conservative approach of looking at the low side of the range. If a price of at least that level is favorable to them (covers their production costs), they'll make a marketing decision or decide what crop to grow.

**Maury Brannon - Union Equity**

Users really have to realize that the U.S. range and the average price do not directly apply to them. There are price differentials that apply fairly consistently to every marketing area and producers have to learn what these differentials are and take them into account.

**Dick Fenwick - Bank for Cooperatives**

He wants to start with a question or comment on processes. He gets about 16 NASS reports and received about 14 renewal notices each year which require separate checks. The same thing happens with ERS reports. It costs more for his company to write a check for any individual report than the cost of the report. He would prefer to get multiple year subscriptions and be able to order all the reports from one form in order to minimize the number of checks he has to write.

**Rich Allen - NASS**

During the past couple years, almost all NASS and ERS reports have become available through the ERS-NASS subscription service. Information for all NASS reports and all ERS reports is now available through the same address and telephone number. This does include 3-year subscriptions. He is not sure what the best way is to convert all of the separate subscriptions to ERS-NASS with a minimum of duplicate reports or minimum cost. He will ask Ben Blankenship of the Economic Management Staff Information Staff to contact Dick Fenwick.

Surprisingly, not all data users who are aware of ERS-NASS have changed to it. One reason for not changing is some organizations do have drawing accounts with the Government Printing Office (GPO) for reports, data tapes, etc., from many different Government agencies, and so they continue to use GPO.

**Dick Fenwick - Bank for Cooperatives**

As far as farmers' need for data, he finds that financial institutions and others that advise farmers often need longer perspectives. Is there any chance of ERS or someone else in USDA publishing projections for 5 years or longer? That type of projection might be available now through organizations like Wharton Econometrics but the USDA numbers should be as good.

**Jim Donald - WAOB**

The USDA has put a process in place the past couple years to look at 5 years out. The reviews and discussion are similar to those for short-term forecasts. ERS is the key organization for these analyses. Some of the projections were in the August 1990 Feed and Wheat Situation reports. These reports discussed, in general, trends and changes in production and use on global and broad regions. More of them might be available by the 1991 USDA Outlook meeting. These may be a separate report sometime in the future if this is successful. One of the major problems we have is that the 5-year projections are so dependent on the policy assumptions used.

**Dick Fenwick - Bank for Cooperatives**

Given structural changes in agriculture, is it safe to assume that many large farms are doing a good job of analyzing raw data?

**Maury Brannon - Union Equity**

He feels that even those farms largely depend on other advisors to make the interpretations.

**Bill Edwards - Kansas Farm Bureau**

He has been in for the annual Ag. Outlook meetings. While he enjoyed the experience and particularly benefitted from the chance to meet so many people, he was disappointed that there was very little new information. He felt he already know most of the data being used and had hoped to see something new.



**Richard Rudel - University of Missouri Extension**

He has some additional thoughts on data for farmers. We should all be trying to get data to farmers as fast as possible. Farmers should be given enough information to know if a piece of data is new, how that data differed from expected, and how the data might affect them. People making planting and marketing decisions need quick access.

He has some questions on feed and residual of corn. Whenever he examines the data it seems like 60-67 percent of the feed and residual gets used in the first two quarters. It seems to him that the residual must be high in the first two quarters and the last two quarters must be mostly feed usage. He wonders if there may be some reporting problems.

**John Witzig - NASS**

He thinks Richard is about right on the feed and residual use; the first two quarters account for nearly two-thirds of annual feed and residual. There may be several reasons for this: NASS takes corn out of stocks when it changes form so cracked grain would not be counted as stocks even if not yet fed, grain in transit does not get counted as stocks so the residual would be higher if there is normally high movement the first two quarters, and the stocks survey procedures concentrate on farm operators. Landlord stocks of grain on land that no one else controls are not picked up very well by present procedures. If landlords have the heaviest holdings earlier in the year, this contributes to high residuals early and low later (this may be a significant soybean factor).

**Bill Edwards - Kansas Farm Bureau**

He thinks that soybean meal production also shows a heavy percentage during the first two quarters.

**Richard Rudel - University of Missouri Extension**

He also feels that the relationships between corn and wheat feeding seem inconsistent in heavy wheat feeding years. Part of the inconsistency might be in changes in wheat residual but part might be explained by total feed use analysis. He finds that heavy wheat feeding years affect his forecasts for the next few subsequent years since they do not fit models very well.

**Maury Brannon - Union Equity**

He feels that the Economic Agencies could make their reports more useful by making them stand out more. The key information should be up front with clear statements on what the data mean. Perhaps some bolding could be used for emphasis.

**Mack Leath - ERS**

Has Maury noticed the modular writing approach now used for the wheat situation and, if so, is this an improvement?

**Maury Brannon - Union Equity**

Yes, this is a good style.

**Rich Allen - NASS**

Before flying out on Monday, he signed the cover letter for the final report of a NASS Report Review Team which he will send to Maury. The report recommends such changes as more graphics of key data, adding comparisons with the previous forecast for yield tables, and identification of contact people. Some of these changes will be implemented this year and others next year.

**Jerry Rector - WAOB**

It is not possible to do many fancy things within lockup. On dates like January 11, there were six different reports to finalize and get immediate release copies printed.

**Bill Edwards - Kansas Farm Bureau**

Good planning may help to improve the content. He puts a newsletter out each Friday at 3:00 p.m. (Central Time). If NASS has a report that day, he gets the data about 2:15 p.m. but has built his graphics data file so he can still create graphs by 3:00 p.m.

As far as making USDA data directly available to farmers, he sees a real trend for farmers to use more and more consultants for scouting for diseases, marketing, etc. Thus, they are willing to pay for advice.

**T. J. Byrum - NASS, Topeka, Kansas**

He agrees that most farmers are secondary data users and will remain so. His office has mainly farm organizations, farm advisors, and extension on its immediate information release list. However, there are a few farmers on that list also.

**Paul Walsh - NASS, Columbia, Missouri**

His office summarizes all data affecting Missouri in its farm bulletin twice a month which goes free to farmer reporters. Last year over 180,000 copies were distributed.

**Bill Edwards - Kansas Farm Bureau**

He assumes that farmers who really want to use data directly can get it directly on computer screens through wire services or advisory networks.

**Richard Rudel - University of Missouri Extension**

How does someone go about getting an analysis of the different private price forecasts that are available? Could USDA take an active role of evaluating performance?

**Jim Donald - WAOB**

Price forecasts need to be localized to be effective to the farmer. USDA is not going to get into the business of making regional or State forecasts. As an overall measure of performance, comparisons with the futures market might be attempted.

**Rich Allen - NASS**

Since Government should not be interfering in private sector activities it would seem inappropriate for public organizations to publish evaluations of various private forecasters (particularly for nonregulatory entities like the Economic Agencies). This might be a good thesis topic for research.



**Bill Edwards - Kansas Farm Bureau**

He had some final comments and a question. We have been talking about looking at USDA numbers over a full year. Producers have to look at seasonal and regional affects. What farmers really want are concrete answers for areas of great uncertainty. His question is to NASS. His observation is that there is a tendency for overestimates on hogs and perhaps cattle on feed. Is this a new pattern and is there an explanation for it?

**Rich Allen - NASS**

NASS has had more difficulty with the Hogs and Pigs report in recent quarters than usual. Revisions have been made in each of the last 5 quarters, all in the downward direction. There is nothing that we have been able to pinpoint which has caused this string of events. We definitely hope to avoid falling into a pattern of over- or under-estimation. Since balance sheet indications are reviewed along with survey indications, there normally is no pattern to any later adjustments. However, it should be pointed out that the sampling error for the total hogs and pigs expansion is about one and a half percent so the revisions have been within sampling error, although more prevalent than NASS would prefer.

**Richard Rudel - University of Missouri Extension**

From time to time, he has tried to analyze the different kinds of Government acreage programs. He has trouble coming up with consistent figures for base acres and program acres. Is there some way to get the right figures? He often comes up with variations of 3-4 million acres.

**Jerry Rector - WAOB**

The base acres figures really come from ASCS. Before the county offices were computerized, it was particularly difficult to define consistent figures. Thus, getting a consistent series across a number of years is probably impossible.

**John Witzig - NASS**

NASS does have an annual series of acreage of principal crops. That series shows about 363 million planted acres when there are no farm programs.

**DATA USERS MEETING**  
**Washington, D.C.**  
**March 19, 1991**

**John Wilson - Ocean Spray Cranberries, Inc.**

He commented that he was here to learn. His office is working hard to upgrade its knowledge of all cranberry crop forecasting procedures. He is also checking with universities and others about crop modeling possibilities. The first thing he wonders about is the accuracy of crop forecast numbers. Can that be expressed such as within 5 percent, 3 percent, etc.?

**Charles Caudill - NASS**

The "accuracy" of an early season forecast is a combination of variation due to sampling but also the "forecast" error--how much can conditions change due to adverse (or very favorable) weather or other factors such as disease. Nearly all NASS crop reports have a section on reliability which publishes past performance records.

**Rich Allen - NASS**

Last year, the forecast performance was looked at in a new way for major crops. The production forecast for each month for the past 20 years was compared to the final on a percentage basis and graphs were prepared. (Graphs were available for wheat and corn to show to the group assembled.) For the crops studied, usually only 2 or 3 years out of the 20 with very unusual weather differed by as much as 10 percent from the final production figure for the first forecast. That got better each month with most years being within 2 or 3 percent for the last forecast.

**Charles Caudill - NASS**

For a crop like Florida citrus which is based on a survey with large sample sizes and special forecasting models, the early forecasts might have a sampling precision of 5 or 6 percent. However, the severe freeze years probably have degraded the actual performance to a plus or minus 10 percent record overall.

NASS has looked at alternatives which might simulate upcoming weather to improve forecasts but none have proven statistically or cost effective.

**John Wilson - Ocean Spray Cranberries, Inc.**

Another interest or concern has to do with Canadian imports. He is not sure if they are being tracked. Who in U.S. Government would be tracking imports, and do they track products as well as the raw commodity?

**Gerald Bange - WAOB**

The basic agreement between the U.S. and Canadian Governments is that we accept Canadian imports as our export estimates and Canada accepts data on our imports as their exports. Tom Warden in ERS heads up their import/export analysis, so you may wish to check with him.



**John Lee - ERS**

ERS gets basic data on imports from the Department of Commerce and spends a lot of time clearing up inconsistencies. There is a great deal of detail on commodities and products although he does not know about cranberries. The data that ERS cleans up are published in the Foreign Agriculture Trade of the United States (FATUS) 6 times a year.

**Jerry Coffey - Office of Management & Budget**

He understands that, because of close communications between the statistical organizations in Canada and the U.S. which work on import and export data, some changes are being made. The original assumption that countries focused more closely on import data than exports was a reasonable approach. However, it is being found that there may be very good export statistics available for some items through associations or other organizations. Thus, decisions will be made on a case by case basis of the best data to use.

**Duane Mergner - Northharvest Beans**

He is happy to see the early season dry beans by class data listed as a new feature. How many States and how many classes will be covered?

**John Witzig - NASS**

This will include the same 16 States for the end of the season and will cover all end of season classes. In June, only total acreage of dry beans will be published but the acreage will be broken out by classes in the August Crop Production report.

**John Van Dyke - USDA/AMS**

He wanted to comment that AMS is now going through a data base implementation. Within the next year, all of their field offices will have a data base of AMS data for internal use. This will include livestock, grain, fruit, vegetables, poultry, and tobacco. In the future, they hope to be able to provide other Government agencies like ERS and NASS with information in an electronic format.

**Tim Courneya - Northharvest Beans**

What is the degree of accuracy of dry beans in the March intentions?

**John Witzig - NASS**

He indicated that he will check the "track record" of changes from March to final for Tim. He believes that the March survey has been pretty good for the U.S. level, but it still is an intentions survey. Final plantings depend on weather and economic conditions.

**Tim Courneya - Northharvest Beans**

What does the 2 to 3 percent sampling error figure for the June survey mean when some years have up to 10 percent changes? For example, planted acres for North Dakota last June were shown as 630,000 and that general level was used for harvested acres in August. At the end of the year, the planted acres turned out to be 570,000. That meant that a lot of beans were not produced that people had expected.

**Fred Vogel - NASS**

Dry bean acreage is one that can change considerably. In his home area of Nebraska, some people may go to beans if they don't get other crops like beets in or if they lose an early planting. We do use seed sales and other data to try and get the best planting figure.

**John Witzig - NASS**

The June figure is "planted or to be planted." Since dry beans often go in after nearly everything else, there may have been planting intentions last June which were not realized.

**Rich Allen - NASS**

It is important to also realize that the 2 to 3 percent sampling error figure would be at the U.S. level for a crop. It might be 5 to 6 percent or higher for individual States for crops like dry beans.

**Tim Courneya - Northharvest Beans**

How does NASS determine what States are to report for dry beans?

**John Witzig - NASS**

NASS looks at each crop after the Census of Agriculture data becomes available every 5 years to see what States have increased (or decreased) acreage significantly. There were two States added last year since their dry bean acreage had increased from 1982 to 1987.

**Tim Courneya - Northharvest Beans**

South Dakota may have a significant acreage of one class of beans although their total acreage is not high.

**John Witzig - NASS**

The South Dakota total acreage must have been considerably below that of the last State that we added and probably was under 1 percent of the U.S.

**John Lee - ERS**

He wondered if Tim Courneya has any feedback on use of ERS Situation and Outlook reports.

**Tim Courneya - Northharvest Beans**

He admitted that he had not looked at the ERS reports. That is part of today's education.

**Tim Courneya - Northharvest Beans**

He pointed out that his association is working with NASS to create the best list of growers for the new surveys.

**Charles Caudill - NASS**

Good lists of producers are very important for estimating specialty commodities. You can't do it with a general purpose area frame survey.



**Jerry Coffey - Office of Management & Budget**

His work does not get him into the details of estimation programs. He hopes NASS' OMB budget examiner will be at the meeting later. This type of meeting contributes to the decision process on estimating programs. He thinks the Economic Agencies of USDA do have a good process of program review.

**Charles Caudill - NASS**

Sometimes our reviews and budget decisions may result in decisions that we regret. A few years ago with very tight budgets, we cut out the December area frame survey used for livestock estimates and winter wheat and rye seedings. It did save \$1 million or so in interviewing costs, but we would like to have the extra indications back. At the time we were integrating our separate grain stocks and hogs surveys with a new sampling approach for crop acreage and production and felt we could give up the year end area survey which was about a one quarter subsample.

The area sample does offer some great advantages to counter list sampling problems of missing farms or duplication. We can define the exact spot on the ground and can account for the operator, land use, etc. It doesn't work quite as well for livestock but it is excellent for crops.

There are a tremendous number of statistics that we are asked to do which we may put a lower priority on. However, we probably don't publish anything that no one uses. For example, we might consider floriculture as a lower priority item since it is not food or fiber. However, whenever it has been dropped as part of a budget cut, Congress has put it back in. When Congress restores a program, they may not allocate the number of people or money to do the job as well as we would like. The last time that floriculture was taken out, we lost 10 personnel ceiling positions but did not get any back when Congress reinstated funding. He recently had a long letter from a floriculture data user who identified a long list of additional data needs. That data user said that only Hawaii does a good job currently--that is because of special State funding.

**Jane Keffer - American Sugar Cane League and Wallace & Edwards**

She is not as familiar with data and reports as she will be in the near future. She sees some information on sugar in the Agricultural Outlook. Is that broken out by beet and cane?

**John Lee - ERS**

His staff does analyze data by cane and beet sources in the Situation and Outlook reports. NASS does have State data on production by type but there are not State data on consumption.

**Jane Keffer - American Sugar Cane League and Wallace & Edwards**

She also wondered if there are any data on the effects on crops if no chemicals would be used?

**John Lee - ERS**

That is an ERS responsibility but there are not any current projects. When EPA is considering re-registration of pesticides, a cost benefit analysis is required of the probable effects of losing specific chemicals for designated crops. ERS has published reports on the past analyses. Herman Delvo is the best ERS contact for information.

**Jane Keffer - American Sugar Cane League and Wallace & Edwards**

She had the opportunity to talk to people at break about General Agreement on Trade and Tariff (GATT) negotiations and what would happen to specific commodities under GATT provisions. Are there any other "bad guy" crops other than sugar?

**John Lee - ERS**

Each country has different policies for specific commodities. The commodities that could be most affected by GATT provisions might include sugar, peanuts, rice, and possibly milk. Those are commodities for which the U.S. cost of production is higher than for other countries.

**Charles Caudill - NASS**

The discussion on sugar reminded him that the new Farm Bill specified monthly Sugar Market Statistics reports rather than the present quarterly reports. USDA is determining whether to go in that direction. There was no funding provided for the additional reports. FAS actually reimburses NASS for the present quarterly series.

There are several other provisions in the Farm Bill which would require additional surveys or data series but which were not funded. The USDA is determining which of these items to support. NASS will pick up the minor oilseeds without new money to cover. This will be a difficult data series since there will be so few producers in the whole country.

**Jerry Rector - WAOB**

One thing that was brought up in Kansas City last week was the possibility of publishing off-farm grain stocks of wheat by class. Anything (even U.S. or regional data) would be helpful to minimize the amount of data which has to be created in the Interagency Committee process. He also pointed out that information needs to be put out as clearly as possible on what NASS will do with minor oilseeds.

**Charles Caudill - NASS**

NASS did issue a press release which explained that data would be published at the end of the season on acres, yield, production, and prices. Sunflower data will be available during the season for the same 5 States in the normal estimating program. NASS will work with the Agriculture Stabilization and Conservation Service on their minor oilseeds data needs.

**Jerry Rector - WAOB**

NASS should double check with Jimmy Matthews of the WAOB and the ERS oilseeds analysts to be sure they know what information will be available from NASS for Situation and Outlook reports.



**Gerald Bange - WAOB**

Since dry bean, cranberry, and sugar representatives are here he wanted to point out that the WAOB does have a specialty crops coordinator. Ed Missiean chairs the Interagency Committees for all the specialties. He has a particularly good foreign knowledge. There is currently a lot of concern and constraint on sugar reports. Debates are going on within USDA and data users should let their thoughts be known.

**Jerry Coffey - Office of Management & Budget**

He was struck by a couple of the earlier comments. The balancing of forecast error versus sampling error is interesting if it implies that sampling error is the lesser important. Also, was it a choice to concentrate on the June area frame when the December area frame survey was dropped?

**Charles Caudill - NASS**

We felt we were far enough along with our methodology and with new U.S. level indications that we could give up the December area subsample when the budget was tight. No one outside the Agency has probably recognized any change but it did limit available indications.

If we were able to institute a full area frame survey at the end of the year with a separate sample it would help us to reduce response burden for new surveys such as the economic data to match up with pesticide interviews. Presently, people in the June area frame sample who are not on our list frame get called on several times a year. Adding new surveys increases the burden on those people.

**Jerry Coffey - Office of Management & Budget**

What extent would the improved listbuilding efforts underway and envisioned for next year help NASS options?

**Charles Caudill - NASS**

If we are successful in building up list coverage, we would actually have even a smaller number of area frame operators not on the list from which to sample. However, the improved list coverage might allow us to use different sampling and estimation alternatives.

**Jerry Coffey - Office of Management & Budget**

He knows that the Department of Energy has "cut a deal" with some operations to interview them less often and impute their data in later surveys.

**Rich Allen - NASS**

NASS does have some informal arrangements with large operations to avoid calling on them constantly. For example, some feedlots may tell our State office to stop by and observe their lots to estimate cattle rather than reporting to us each month. Those firms might answer the quarterly survey and we estimate for the shorter monthly surveys in between.

**John Wilson - Ocean Spray Cranberries, Inc.**  
How does NASS build its list?

**Rich Allen - NASS**

In the 70's, NASS tried to build a complete list of farms in every State. Each office obtained all lists from Government Agencies, grower associations, farm publications, etc., that might contain farmers. Very good software was written to standardize names and addresses, unduplicate records, and even calculate an estimated probability of a record being a farm. Extensive follow-up was done to verify which records were farms and to determine size of operation and what livestock were raised.

We have continued to add high quality lists but efforts in recent years, due to tight budgets, have been mostly to maintain information about present operations, not to improve coverage. There are tremendous changes every year as operations consolidate, get new partners, turn over generations, etc.

**John Lee - ERS**

We try to think of a farm as a set arrangement that is consistent over time but that often is not the case. He offered his family as an example, His father and 3 sons were farming but they changed arrangements from year to year. They not only farmed in different arrangements with each other but also with outsiders from time to time.

**John Lee - ERS**

In closing, he commented that ERS has strived for an ongoing critique process. They have sought specific evaluations of certain reports or new products. Meetings like this add to the evaluation process. He will be sure that people in this group get example reports which cover specialty commodities.

**DATA USERS MEETINGS**  
**San Francisco, California**  
**April 11, 1991**

**Mike Fitch - Wells Fargo Bank**

Will USDA utilize State chemical data such as being required in States like California or will growers be recontacted for the data?

**Ron Radenz - NASS, Sacramento, California**

His office is involved in the summarization of the California pesticide data and they will be used for NASS publications. However, the California law does not require reporting of fertilizer use and NASS will need to contact a sample of growers to pick up that portion of chemical use.

**Jim Trabulse - Illustrated Forecasts**

Who interprets satellite imagery for USDA? Is the Central Intelligence Agency used?

**Gerald Bange - WAOB**

The interpretations used by the Interagency Commodity Estimates Committees are done by USDA professional staff members. LANDSAT and METSAT (Meteorological Satellite) imagery is analyzed on a regular basis. Imagery is very helpful in monitoring crop progress, including plant emergence and plant senescence. Also, vegetative indices gives a relative measure of plant vigor. The satellite interpretations are very useful when combined with weather information.

**Jim Trabulse - Illustrated Forecasts**

How do data from the Bureau of the Census fit into USDA analysis?

**Gerald Bange - WAOB**

The Bureau of the Census collects and reports the official numbers for exports, crushings, and cotton ginnings. These numbers are used to develop supply/demand balance sheets. There is normally a delay of 6 to 8 weeks before the latest export figures are available. Quarterly reporting by the Bureau of the Census makes it more difficult to prepare supply/demand assessments for the affected commodities.

**Mike Fitch - Wells Fargo Bank**

Andy Aaronson mentioned that his rice analyses are done by type. Is cotton similarly broken out anywhere?



**Mack Leath - ERS**

Yes, almost all analysis involves separate review of pima cotton and upland. NASS breaks American Pima out separately in its Crop Production reports and ERS analyzes it in the Cotton and Wool Situation and Outlook reports. The WASDE report usually groups all cotton together in tables but each type is analyzed separately and specific comments could be included in the narrative portion, if appropriate.

**Mike Fitch - Wells Fargo Bank**

He had a comment rather than another question. He feels that the greatest threat to agriculture in California right now is not water shortages nor exotic pests but its increasing urban encroachment. With car phones and fax machines, people can operate farther and farther from traditional work centers. This was the topic of a very good University of California Ag Seminar last year. That seminar is summarized in a publication entitled "Conflicts of Change."

**Jerry Siebert - University of California, Berkeley**

This presentation today and the opportunity for discussion have been excellent. However, a much larger attendance might have resulted if the session had been in Sacramento. He works with the Commonwealth Club of California which has one agricultural related meeting each month in San Francisco. Even with a data base of nearly 600 names it is still difficult to get consistent attendance.

**Bill Penney - Associated Feed & Supply**

Fresno might have been a good location to include the poultry and cotton interests.

**Jim Trabulse - Illustrated Forecasts**

He has a series of survey questions. Are NASS surveys voluntary? How are responses collected? If surveys are voluntary, how well do farmers cooperate?

**Fred Vogel - NASS**

NASS surveys are voluntary; the only present exception is for the handlers and processors of peanuts. The Peanut Stocks report was written into law as a mandatory survey. The individual questionnaires collected by NASS are confidential and are protected by law.

The Agency uses a combination of mail, telephone, and personal interviews. The area frame survey in June must be conducted by personal visits to determine who operates within the boundaries and to map out each field. However, for the next year those area frame operators can then be recontacted by mail or telephone just like list frame operators.

Mail response rates have probably declined somewhat. However, for a survey such as the Farm Report where a person gets a questionnaire every month the response might still be 60 percent or so. Mail is not the major data completion technique for most surveys because the data collection period is so short. Most States will send everyone in the Quarterly Agriculture Survey sample a questionnaire but some States do not

request them to be mailed back. The copy of the questionnaire authenticates the survey purpose and may encourage some operators to think about the questions before they are called. Some people such as large operators or ones who have indicated that they don't want to be telephoned are identified for personal contact only. People who can't be contacted by telephone on the present survey are also contacted in person.

About 80 percent of the data for the Quarterly Agricultural Survey are collected by telephone. Many of our State offices have a computer aided telephone interviewing (CATI) capability whereby the interviewer works from a computer screen. After each answer is entered, the appropriate next questions appear. This approach captures the answers in a machine processable form and can do some editing of answers for consistency. All States will soon have the CATI capability in the next year or so as new local area networks of personal computers are installed in our offices.

Response rates vary with the highest in the Southeast and West and the lowest in the Northern Plains. There are very few refusals to the personal interviews to the area frame survey and if there is a refusal, the interviewer is in a position to observe most of the requested data. For other general surveys, the response rate may be 85 to 90 percent. Those people who refuse, or can not be found in time for the current survey, are accounted for by imputation procedures. If information is not received for a very big operation selected with certainty, data might be estimated based on knowledge of that operation. For sampled operations, data will be imputed based on actual reports for the same selection stratum.

#### **Jim Trabulse - Illustrated Forecasts**

Have reductions in budgets affected quality of data?

##### **Fred Vogel - NASS**

Most of the reduction in the 1980's were taken by dropping data series to maintain the quality of series remaining. Several surveys were combined (hogs, grain stocks, and crop acreage and production) in order to expand sample sizes. The Gramm-Rudman cuts in 1990, since they were expected to be for only one year, were handled by reducing hiring of personnel and cutting back on some sample sizes, such as for the July Cattle Survey. Most of the 1990 cutbacks have been restored for 1991.

#### **Jim Trabulse - Illustrated Forecasts**

Has the declining percent of population engaged in agriculture made your job easier or harder?

##### **Fred Vogel - NASS**

In most ways it has made the work harder since we need current information on who produces particular commodities such as hogs in order to design efficient samples. A general purpose nonstratified sample would not work well when many commodities are produced by less than 20 percent of all farms.

#### **Jim Trabulse - Illustrated Forecasts**

Who do you work with in large operations for information and are they evasive?

**Rich Allen - NASS**

We depend on our State offices to be in close contact with large operations and to determine who to contact. We might even have the bookkeeper's name on the mailing label or on the telephoning instructions if he or she is the person with the best information and has been authorized to report. For large operations that report regularly on surveys such as Cattle on Feed, Hatchery, Grain Stocks, etc., the reports are examined for consistency. We sometimes find that a change of bookkeeper might show up as a change in reporting and we need to educate the new person. The company is not being evasive but the reporting guidelines might be complicated. Sometimes we might need to contact more than one person for an operation. The bookkeeper for a feedlot may know the numbers on feed, placements, marketings, and deaths. However, for quarterly surveys, we may need to contact a different person to get the weight breakouts.

**Bill Penney - Associated Feed & Supply**

Have the integrated surveys made it more difficult to contact the right types of operations?

**John Witzig - NASS**

Since there are relationships between the types of data being collected (such as most hog operations having stocks of grains for feeding) the approach does work well. The large operations for hogs and stocks are included in the sample with high probabilities of selection as are producers of important crops. The overall result is more positive responses from the combined sample than we could afford in separate single purpose surveys.

**Jim Trabulse - Illustrated Forecasts**

He was surprised and somewhat aggravated last November when there was such a large increase in the forecasted level of soybean production. This seemed to be an unacceptable change to him.

**John Witzig - NASS**

He is glad that Jim acknowledges that this was an unusual change. Normally, October 1 forecast levels are quite solid for corn and soybeans. The late planting year in 1990 made interpretations very difficult for farmers and others. By October 1, the corn looked great (actually better than it turned out to be) but soybeans, being so late, did not look good. Soybeans made good progress during October and the true potential was not recognized until November 1.

**Jim Trabulse - Illustrated Forecasts**

Why has the Bureau of the Census gone to quarterly only reporting and could this have been prevented?

**John Witzig - NASS**

This was part of the Department of Commerce budgetary process. They needed to save funds and changed the reporting of many series through the Bureau of the Census to



quarterly. When the plans were first announced in the Federal Register, every agency present at this meeting sent letters of protest, as did many private agricultural organizations.

**Gerald Bange - WAOB**

WAOB is not pleased with the final decision. In written comments to the Bureau of the Census, WAOB identified all the uses of monthly data and cited the analytical effects if frequency were cut back. The Department of Commerce may have continued monthly reporting if private funding had been found. Should the Department of Commerce reconsider its decision, WAOB will reference this discussion if given the opportunity.

**Gerald Bange - WAOB**

He wanted to add a comment to the discussion earlier on confidentiality. The WASDE report is not "pre-released" to anyone. Like the NASS Crop Production report, the WASDE report is prepared under highly secured conditions.

**Rich Allen - NASS**

That comment reminded him of a fact that most people may not realize. Six of the NASS data series and the WASDE report have been classified as Principal Economic Indicators, similar to unemployment and cost of living estimates. That classification requires certain handling and publication procedures. USDA refused to follow one of the Principal Economic Indicators procedures which specified that the White House should be informed of results an hour or so ahead of publication. The USDA position is that no one can have advanced information unless they are in the locked up area from which there is no exit or outside communication until the 3:00 p.m. release.

**Joseph Smith - Oilseeds International Ltd.**

He gets reports from many of the individual States. It appears that each one "does it own thing." For example, Minnesota uses many graphs but might not have the basic numbers in their report. It would be helpful to have more uniformity in the State releases.

**Fred Vogel - NASS**

The State publications are probably more variable than they should be. Each of our offices reports through a State-Federal cooperative agreement with the State Department of Agriculture or a land grant institution or both. Some of the differences are due to the requirements or wishes of the State cooperator. Some cooperators fund extra efforts to break forecasts out to sub-State levels, for example. In the past 10 years, most States have been forced to go to consolidated releases twice a month or so rather than individual reports for each commodity due to printing and postage costs. Even with user fees, reporters get free copies so the Agency postage budget will be about \$1.5 million. The choices of what to put into these consolidated releases and the timing causes some of the State to State variation.

**Ron Radenz - NASS, Sacramento, California**

He would like any personal input on the California releases. They are trying to include more graphics but not at the expense of publishing numbers. Narratives will be reduced instead.

**Bill Trabulse - Illustrated Forecasts**

It is important to pick a good graphics package which provides clear results without taking up too much space.

**Thomas Kearney - University of California Cooperative Extension-Yolo County**

Could USDA change all reporting from bushel weights to pounds? Could it be done? Would it be more or less expensive?

**Fred Surls - ERS**

This demonstrates the regional differences within the country. California marketers have always been more in tune to a pound or hundredweight basis than the midwest. However, if there is ever a change it might be due to a push to metrics. Would that really be better for data users?

**Thomas Kearney - University of California Cooperative Extension-Yolo County**

He has often been concerned with NASS price levels. They seem to be too high for California where much of the grain is sold on a farm point of sale basis. Of course, the general California price level is often the Midwest plus transportation. What does NASS use as the point of sale or does it calculate what the price ought to be?

**Ron Radenz - NASS, Sacramento, California**

There is often a very "thin" market for grain corn marketed and he is not sure if Market News does pick up daily quotes. He wanted to point out that the NASS series is based on actual purchases and is not based on price quotes only.

**Lowell Serfling - USDA/AMS**

The Stockton office of AMS does pick up corn price quotes every day. The main market news publication is a weekly summary but the daily prices are available.

**Fred Vogel - NASS**

The NASS approach to grain prices is a probability sample of grain elevators buying from farmers. The farms report their purchases for the previous month (total bushels) and the total dollars paid for that grain. If the producer delivers grain to the elevator no deductions are made for the transportation cost which may explain much of the difference that Tom has noted. It should also be pointed out that NASS rice series might indicate a different month to month change than daily price quotes since much of the grain delivered may have been forward contracted at a different price than the current one.

**Rich Allen - NASS**

When the probability price approach was implemented about 15 years ago it was felt that it wasn't feasible to survey all purchasers of grain directly from farmers. Thus,

the elevator sampling approach was used. For much of the country, the major portion of sales missed is farm to farm or farm to feedlot sales which are usually based on local elevator prices so the NASS series should not be biased. However, California was always a concern since much of the grain is purchased by brokers at the farm gate. These brokers would be very difficult to keep a list of and sample.

**William Isgrigg - Washington Barley Commission**

The approach of using elevator price levels to represent farm to feedlot sales might normally be reasonable but the current markets are out of whack. Due to the amounts of poor quality barley now on hand, feedlots are purchasing and paying for the better quality feed barley. What is moving to elevators is the residual.

**Kenneth Dulin - J.G. Boswell Company**

He was surprised by some of the changes in level between the preliminary planting intentions report in February and the final one in March. What goes into those surveys? Why was there almost a 2.5 million acres difference in the two reports?

**Fred Vogel - NASS**

The first intentions survey, conducted in late January, was a special survey and did not use standard procedures. Less than 20,000 farms were contacted. Each of them had responded to the September or December Ag. Surveys so information was available on 1990 operations. The sample was stratified to emphasize major crops across the country. The operators were asked what they intended to plant in 1991 and percent changes were calculated. Since the main purpose of the survey was to judge farmers reactions to the new Farm Bill and many people did not understand the new provisions, a 2-page information sheet was put together with the help of many people in USDA and sent to everyone in the sample ahead of time.

The March survey was our usual survey of about 75,000 operations to get hogs, grain stocks, and intentions information. State level expansions were calculated in this case. This is a better approach in that we have experience from earlier years. It was always felt that there might be changes in intentions from January to March but part of the changes might have been due to the survey designs.

**Kenneth Dulin - J.G. Boswell Company**

What was the real value of the early intentions survey?

**Rich Allen - NASS**

The survey was requested by the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service as an early indication of how farmers would react to the new Farm Bill provisions. If there were startling results, ASCS might have been able to change some 1991 implementation rules.

The major value of the survey might have been to get the survey results out and get farmers' attention about the time that more detailed Farm Bill details were available. Thus, farmers may have studied provisions more thoroughly and made more definite plans ahead of the March sign up period.



NASS does not like to do one-time surveys with no comparable results to match against. Any survey procedure might be biased and historical comparisons can help to eliminate the biases. NASS, and particularly John Witzig, did try to examine all internal relationships for consistency before publishing the January results.

**John Witzig - NASS**

One of the questions asked in January was about 1990 program participation. That summary by States did match up well with actual 1990 signups. All data were expanded by States and the State to State patterns for major crops did look reasonable by region. Another check was to add up acres of all crops to see if they were realistic at the National level compared to farm program provisions in other years.

**William Isgrigg - Washington Barley Commission**

Do the USDA people here think that an early December or January intentions figure each year might cause farmers to take actions they might not have otherwise?

**Rich Allen - NASS**

He hopes that farmers will always utilize multiple pieces of data rather than depending on just one. The only advantage of a very early figure might be to start the thinking process of farmers and those who advise farmers.

**John Witzig - NASS**

He wanted to add that the only surprises in March might have been the lower cotton figures in some States (the California figures were understood due to water) and the soybeans total. However, the soybeans would not have been surprising if it hadn't been for the January survey.

**William Isgrigg - Washington Barley Commission**

How does USDA project prices for the marketing year?

**Andy Aaronson - WAOB**

The very first forecast is based on the examination of previous marketing years. What happened in years with similar supplies and similar competitive situations? As the year progresses, NASS prices and volume marketed figures are used to adjust the projection.

**Fred Surls - ERS**

Individual analysts might look at separate factors such as stocks to use, etc., in forming their judgements.

**William Isgrigg - Washington Barley Commission**

What is the accuracy of early season price projections?

**Andy Aaronson - WAOB**

The early season price range is usually large (perhaps plus or minus a dollar). The season average price (SAP) is usually in the forecast price range but not necessarily at the midpoint. There is good discussion in the ICEC meetings. The price range is narrowed as more and more market information becomes available.

**Gerald Bange - WAOB**

He would encourage Bill Isgrigg to talk to the various USDA analysts for more explanation on how they project prices for specific grains.

**Rich Allen - NASS**

Is price one of the aspects that the WAOB will evaluate in its track record analysis?

**Gerald Bange - WAOB**

Increasingly, the projections and forecasts released by USDA are being scrutinized for accuracy. Pressure to do so is coming from various quarters. The General Accounting Office tends to look at our forecasting program from an accounting perspective. GAO wants procedures to be documented and standardized as much as possible. Others, like Assistant Secretary for Economics look at forecasts from an econometrics perspective. Irregardless of viewpoint, all want to see the track record. In particular, all want to know how much past projections have varied from final figures and how often projections are above or below the final estimate. Generally, price projections cannot be analyzed with ease or precision because of the difficulty of analyzing ranged forecasts.

An illustration of GAO's approach is the 1988 drought. The early season projections for May, June, and July were probably very reasonable. By the time NASS started forecasting in August, much more information was available. Nevertheless, a GAO auditor concluded that USDA's early season projections were "wrong."

Also, some auditors fail to understand the concept of a commodity supply/demand balance sheet which restricts how independently each figure determined. Generally, USDA's aggregate projections look good. Often this is because of offsetting errors at the county level.

**William Isgrigg - Washington Barley Commission**

He expects an increase this year in Washington State of the nonprogram crop Tricelate. Can a group like his get data collected by NASS (for a fee)?

**Rich Allen - NASS**

Much of the budget of the California office is based on trust funds or other contributions of industry groups for specific data. If data are requested for one State, the usual approach is to go through the State Department of Agriculture. If it involves many States, the arrangement is usually made with NASS headquarters. The type of arrangement has been made by the Malting Barley Improvement Association in the past. Costs of additional data collection are often not too great if coordination with existing surveys can be done.

**Fred Vogel - NASS**

Bill's group should work directly with Doug Hasslen in our Washington State office.

**William Isgrigg - Washington Barley Commission**

They have already made some contact with Doug.

**John Witzig - NASS**

The year-end ASCS data may be helpful if they are successful in picking up acreage of all crops this year as they intend.

**Joseph Smith - Oilseeds International Ltd.**

It seems to him that the periodic transfers of FAS attaches would eliminate the potential for some personal biases but do contact sources remain the same when attaches move? That is, do they do a good job of passing down notes? Also, is it now possible to travel more freely in Russia and to evaluate the agricultural situation?

**Fred Surls - ERS**

Many attaches have foreign nationals on the staff who help in collecting information so they maintain the continuity even when attaches change. There are, of course, differences due to attaches since some are more market development oriented than statistically oriented.

**Gerald Bange - WAOB**

He mentioned how important the foreign national can be. For instance, there is a real coffee expert working for FAS in Brazil who may be very difficult to replace when he retires.

He is not sure it is any easier to evaluate conditions in the Soviet Union. There are still many administrative hoops and FAS can not travel freely. Generally, travel is permitted only in the best areas. Still, bits and pieces of information must be put together. The Soviets do report production figures at the end of the year--well after the fact.

**Andy Aaronson - WAOB**

In one way things have gotten more difficult. That is, with changes in foreign Governments, can we assume the production estimates are put together in the same way?

**Gerald Bange - WAOB**

There is another factor which may increase the difficulty. The Soviets appear to be changing official reporting from a "bunker" weight to a "clean" weight basis. Right now there may be combinations of data being reported. Clean weights may be 7-10 percent less based on some very preliminary analysis.

Also, remember our attache office for the Soviet Union is understaffed because of the limits on staff and space there.



**Joseph Smith - Oilseeds International Ltd.**

Is there a feeling that any of the FAS foreign nationals might be "used" by the host country?

**Gerald Bange - WAOB**

Based on 16 years experience with FAS and WAOB, Mr. Bange indicated that he could cite no evidence that foreign nationals had been "used" by host countries.

**Joseph Smith - Oilseeds International Ltd.**

His concern was because that may have happened to some private companies.

**Gerald Bange - WAOB**

For the most part, FAS collects data in an unclassified environment. Data might be harder to collect if a classified approach were used.

**Lowell Serfling - USDA/AMS**

He does watch all NASS numbers and knows that many of them come out over the AMS wire. He is not sure that ERS or WAOB data get into the AMS system.

**Rich Allen - NASS**

NASS does cooperate with AMS and, in some cases, an AMS analyst comes into lockup to reformat a diskette of report data to put data in a different format for the AMS wire.

**Gerald Bange - WAOB**

WAOB will work with AMS in Washington, D.C. to see if some of the WASDE data should go onto the AMS wire.

## DATA USERS MEETINGS

Chicago, Illinois

May 1, 1991

### **Bob Zdanky - Santa Fe Railroad**

The Department of Commerce has put up a bulletin board that contains export data, etc. Has the USDA considered putting up a central bulletin board of all information from different agencies; including data maintained in Kansas City?

### **Charles Caudill - NASS**

We have been constrained by the Computerized Information Delivery (CID) contract. ERS has done more than most agencies by providing diskettes of some data series. When we develop the specifications for recompetition of the CID, we will build in some future needs for bulletin boards.

### **Jim Epstein - USDA/AMS**

AMS is working on putting up a data base. Currently, you can get price and volume movements. Access by nonfederal users is not now available but is being evaluated.

### **Dick Smetana - Continental Grain**

He started out by complimenting ERS on the electronic format they use to disseminate data. He was referring to the information on diskettes. He then went on to say that he felt the January Planting Intentions report that was released in early February was a real bomb. Farmers did not understand the farm program, and it resulted in unreliable data that was confusing the market. His question was whether the USDA has tried to look at what to do about future programs like this. Will we continue to do the survey? If we do the survey, will we have a larger sample?

### **Bill Lapp - ConAgra**

Perhaps, NASS should let the WAOB publish the data. The problem is that data users automatically assume data such as the January Intentions report are as good as the production and stocks that NASS publishes.

### **Charles Caudill - NASS**

NASS did not want to do this survey, and we do not want to do one next year. The reasons for not doing the survey were well documented; however, the Department felt that it would be important to have an early intentions report. This survey was a one-time special survey. NASS does not plan to do one next year. If we are asked to do another early intentions report, we will review our survey plan to make sure sample sizes are adequate.

**Dick Smetana - Continental Grain**

He mentioned a problem getting reports on release day. Messengers have a hard time getting into the building because of the enhanced security. Could we put a box at the door for priority subscribers? The discussion that followed indicated that security has been relaxed. If the problems persist, people can call (202) 447-4020 to make other arrangements.

**Dave Burrow - Crop Info Services**

The priority subscriptions are not being honored. Get partial reports instead.

**Charles Caudill - NASS**

This happened with the Annual Summary. NASS should have followed up and made sure everyone got the complete reports. The problem was that State tables were not out until the long run, 2 weeks later than usual. We will attempt to make sure this does not happen again.

**Dick Smetana - Continental Grain**

His next question referred to the use of the Bureau of the Census export data. He wondered why we do not change to using inspections for export sales information or some other source that can provide a more current data source. He wondered if we are required by law to use Department of Commerce data.

**Jim Donald - WAOB**

The Government is obligated to use the Bureau of the Census data. He is not sure that there is a statute that says the USDA must use the Bureau of the Census data, but it is the only consistent source across all commodities. Other similar indications of exports, such as inspections, are studied for specific commodities. When the WAOB finds a problem with the Bureau of the Census data, they go back to Census to try to resolve the problem. The Bureau of the Census is usually very cooperative in working with the Department in resolving these data problems.

**Dick Smetana - Continental Grain**

By the time the export data are fixed, the market no longer cares.

**Tom Morgan - Sterling Research Corporation**

The situation on the use of beef import data is very confusing. Beef data in 1989 on imports to Japan are confusing. According to ERS, U.S. beef imports are down 20 percent. FAS says they are 98 percent of last year. The Livestock Industry Promotion Council (LIPC - Japanese group) says they are 102 percent of last year. The problem is that we know the 1989 data are not correct. The economic cost of wrong decisions can become tremendous and reflects on the USDA reputation. He strongly encouraged USDA to push to improve this data series.

**Jim Nix - WAOB**

The harmonized coding system resulted in the Bureau of the Census having major problems adjusting to the new system. Hopefully, these problems will go away over time.



**Charles Caudill - NASS**

U.S. exports to Canada are now computed by Canada. They can monitor imports better than we can monitor exports. The same thing holds true for movement into the U.S. from Canada.

**Dick Smetana - Continental Grain**

His next comment concerned the Grain Stocks report. He has his own way of calculating animal units and uses those to evaluate the feed and residual data for feed grains. He claims that the data for the last 4 or 5 years do not make sense compared to previous relationships. He was wondering if feed rations have changed. Could NASS do an actual survey on feeding practices? He feels that feed and residuals are too high based on the animal numbers.

**Jim Gill - Illinois Farm Bureau**

The quality of the drought crop resulted in feeders having to use more corn.

**Dick Smetana - Continental Grain**

Even taking that into consideration, the feed and residual still do not make sense. He feels that we really need a survey to evaluate feeding practices.

**Charles Caudill - NASS**

The feed and residual data now include not only feed use but all other errors associated with the estimating system. In fact, if we did a statistical analysis we would see a soybean residual of 80 million bushels is not significantly different from zero. We currently do not obtain feed use information from any survey but perhaps we could.

At this point, he interjected the point that while people are making suggestions on new things they would like NASS to do, he would also like to know what NASS can quit doing. In other words, because of limited funds, he would also appreciate knowing which data series NASS produces that could be discontinued.

**Dick Smetana - Continental Grain**

The industry could live without the monthly survey of loan data (this is an ASCS report).

**Robert Wisner - Iowa State University**

He has a need for a lot of historical data in electronic form. Information on quarterly feed and residuals, soybean utilizations, and the flow of grain into and out of price support programs quarterly if possible. The problem is keeping them current, especially when revisions are made. How frequently could we update these data series in electronic media? The information is generally available in the files or releases but it is very time-consuming to get it into electronic media.

His next question had to do with what is the status of satellite imagery use, especially for evaluating crops in the Soviet Union and China.

**Jim Donald - WAOB**

The Department mainly concentrates on the Soviet Union. WAOB uses vegetative indices from the NOAA satellites to evaluate this year compared to previous years. This imagery is used along with weather information and crop calendar information. The methodology is not available to allow the direct use of satellite imagery but it is useful information along with all other information available about the crop and weather conditions.

**Charles Caudill - NASS**

NASS would like to be able to do more with the use of satellite imagery but because of budget constraints we have reduced our program to only using it in the development of the area sampling frame.

**Mike Trant - Statistics Canada**

Agriculture Canada uses the NOAA remote sensing data to evaluate crop growing conditions. Weekly images are produced. This is supplementary information to use along with other information to evaluate crop conditions.

**William Uhrig - Purdue University**

He understands that the CIA is also doing some satellite imagery work on crops. Does USDA cooperate with CIA?

**Jim Donald - WAOB**

We do share some information but the CIA is not as involved as it used to be. They probably use more USDA data than they used to.

**William Uhrig - Purdue University**

He started by saying that he is a strong supporter of the Economic Agencies and the data that they produce, but he did have some concerns about problems with soybean estimates in 1990, both the production forecast and the export estimates. He had a problem with the production increase of 80 million bushels in November and doesn't feel that should have happened. He also had some concern about the small changes of supply and demand estimates published in monthly WASDE reports. Is there any way to pull the small changes together at one time?

**Jim Donald - WAOB**

The fact is that changes do get to be gradual when evaluating all of the pluses and minuses in situations occurring across the entire world.

**David Burrows - Crop Info Service**

He followed up on William Uhrig's comments about the large jump in the 1990 soybean crop forecast and expressed the point that it caused considerable confusion in the market when there is a late change in a crop forecast. He wanted to know why we didn't give a better explanation of what caused it.

**Fred Vogel - NASS**

We agree. We probably could have provided more information in October about how the data from that survey compared to previous years. In most years, a larger percentage of the soybean crop has been harvested by October 1 which means that producers reporting to us have some idea of actual yields. Also, a large percentage of our objective yield plots are harvested by October 1. In 1990, very little of the crop was harvested which meant that the October data were not as reliable as they were in other years. We probably could have provided more information about harvest progress in the soybean narrative.

**William Uhrig - Purdue University**

He feels that during the last 5 years there has been more antagonism than ever before about USDA reports being against the farmers.

**Charles Caudill - NASS**

Actually, refusal rates are better now than they were in the late 1970's.

**Bill Lapp - ConAgra**

He started out by saying he agreed with previous comments about problems with the Bureau of the Census export data. His next comment concerned weekly oat conditions. The data are collected but are not included in the Crop Progress release. As a result, they contact individual States to obtain oat condition. Could oat condition be included in the Crop Progress release? His next comment had to do with attache reports. He used to be able to get a summary of the attache reports. Because the summaries are no longer provided, he has to kill three trees a year for all the paper it takes to get the individual reports.

His final question concerned why the WAOB does not use the same approach to calculate residuals at the world level as it does at the U.S. level.

**Jim Donald - WAOB**

It should be close; however, overall consumption is a residual number.

**Charles Caudill - NASS**

He said that we would evaluate the oat condition data and see if we could put it into the Crop Progress release.

**Jim Gill - Illinois Farm Bureau**

Are we now more successful in getting people into Russia for first-hand evaluation of their crops?

**Jim Donald - WAOB**

There are really very few restrictions on travel in Russia. Generally, attaches are free to travel but within limits. However, our attache office for the Soviet Union is understaffed because of the limits on staff and space.



**Bernard Rosien - Statistics Canada**

He wondered why the NASS data collection periods followed the reference date and why they did not straddle the reference dates. For example, why does the June Survey go from June 1-12, instead of beginning the 25th and going into June.

**Charles Caudill - NASS**

The primary reason is that things such as hog inventories and stocks can change daily. The hog inventory could change 100,000 head per day depending on marketing patterns.

**Dick Smetana - Continental Grain**

What is the reference date for the weekly weather crop?

{The answer given was that it was Friday, but in retrospect, the correct answer should really be that the condition data are as of Friday but things such as planting progress or harvesting progress are projected through the weekend.}

**Bernard Rosien - Statistics Canada**

He wondered why the cattle and hog surveys were not on the same questionnaire and integrated with the March and June surveys.

**Charles Caudill - NASS**

NASS initially tried that but the cattle industry protested; therefore, we had to go back to doing it in July and January.

**Dave Burrows - Crop Info Service**

His main problem has to do with subscriptions. He subscribes to the Weekly Weather & Crop report from 27 States, and he ends up having to deal with 27 invoices. When he first started dealing with these subscriptions, all 27 invoices would come at once. Now they seem to come at 27 different times. He would like to see some centralization of this process. He went on to say that we should really explore enhancing the use of facsimile access. He would be willing to pay a fee for dial-in service to get facsimile service.

**Charles Caudill - NASS**

The facsimile technology really surprised people and it has moved quickly. We probably need to study enhancing the use of it.

**John Witzig - NASS**

He could access CID. Each State office loads its weekly crop weather to CID. CID would provide one access point.

**Dave Burrows - Crop Info Service**

He said that he also likes to get the detailed write-ups. In fact, he wishes the narrative in our reports were more complete. He also said that he would prefer that our data be published in ranges rather than a single number.

**Richard Lowes - Ag. Resource Company**

His comment concerned exports and why we keep finding more old crop soybeans in Brazil? Will we be equaling 1958 levels? He was also concerned about the large jump we made with the soybean production forecast between October and November? That should not have occurred. He also feels an attache summary is needed.

**Bernard Rosien - Statistics Canada**

He brought up the point about residuals in balance sheets and that it is also a problem in Canada. He wondered why we do not make any effort to make the residuals equal to zero. They try very hard in Canada to make their livestock balance sheets have a zero residual.

**Charles Caudill - NASS**

He said we are constrained somewhat in grain balance sheets because our residual is feed use and shrinkage. End of year balance sheets for grain can not have a zero residual, as long as residuals include both feed and shrinkage.

**Ross Carstens - Farmers Grain & Livestock**

He expressed a need for white corn statistics. There is a growing interest among processors to have more white corn information. Evidently, the size of the crop is increasing.

**Charles Caudill - NASS**

We used to estimate white corn production and had to drop it because of budget constraints.

**John Otte - Farm Progress Companies**

As a publisher, he gets a lot of requests for information as well. He often is not sure where he should steer people. That is, whether to the State office or the Headquarters offices.

**Charles Caudill - NASS**

His philosophy on how NASS should respond to reports is that all offices should answer all requests even though they are not directly related to our own data series. He personally will not allow anyone calling his office to be passed along to someone else. If he can not take care of the call, he will make sure that the person who can provide the answer is contacted. He also encouraged the data users to contact State Statisticians in their States.

**Jim Gill - Illinois Farm Bureau**

He wanted to thank NASS for providing the 1-day educational program which includes visiting a "lock-up" to many farmer groups. This program has been very beneficial in helping farmers to understand the need for agricultural statistics.

**John Brandt - Atwood-Larson Company**

He brought up the point that there has to be a way to measure consumption and feed usage. He wanted to encourage us to pursue the problem.

**William Uhrig - Purdue University**

He encouraged us to do some study of long-range weather cycles and encouraged USDA to publish more weather information because of its impact on farm income.

**Jim Donald - WAOB**

He suggested that Mr. Uhrig learn more about what Norton Strommen is doing to evaluate National Weather Service data.

**Susan Sutherland - Quaker Oats Company**

She would like to see white corn data as well and would also like us to gather more information about the consumption of feed including oat consumption.

**Ken Nye - Michigan Farm Bureau**

He wanted to thank USDA for hosting the forum. He said that dry bean and minor oilseed data are very important. His office has a good working relationship with the Michigan Agricultural Statistics Service. They are doing additional surveys on specialty crops involving fruits and vegetables, floriculture, and equine on a cyclical basis. They hope some federal assistance could come. For example, blueberries is a very important crop but little is done on acreage and production. It could deserve more attention.

**Charles Caudill - NASS**

The present Michigan Director of Agriculture, when he was in Congress, inserted language into the 1990 Farm Bill authorizing the production of such statistics. Unfortunately, that did not include an appropriation. However, NASS has requested a million dollars of new program money in the President's 1992 budget to reinstate specialty crop statistics and some will go to Michigan, assuming it is approved by Congress. We do plan to propose to expand the initiative for specialty crops in fiscal year 1993.

**Kyle Stephens - Iowa State University**

The major statistical series are very good. However, we should expand them to provide more information on revisions and collection techniques.

**Fred Vogel - NASS**

The Scope and Methods publication is being rewritten and will contain more of that type of information. In addition, we are putting more information into each current release discussing the reliability of the data, the revision policy, and data collection procedures.

**Tom Morgan - Sterling Research Corporation**

He would like to see more information on processed meats. It used to be done annually by Food Safety Inspection Service, now there is really no information about this. He wanted to illustrate some relationships with cattle inventory. He showed some data showing the calves under 500 pounds as a percent of calf crop. We now have calves weighing 700 pounds. His main point was to request that in our cattle inventory report we obtain calves weighing less than 500 pounds and calves weighing 500-700 pounds and eventually drop the 500-pound level



and go to calves weighing less than 700 pounds. He then went on to discuss the controversy about cattle on feed reported marketings and how data are not being analyzed properly by data users. He showed some relationships of marketing as a percent of inventory using 12-month moving averages. He also showed marketings as a percent of lagged placements. He stated that we now have lower entry weights and more days on feed. His suggestions were that we obtain feedlot placement data by weight categories starting with 300-400 pounds, 400-500 pounds, 500-600 pounds, 600-700 pounds and so on. He also said that people are going to have to learn how to use the data with the lighter entry weights.

He also feels that he needs more information about hides and offal. He also said that data users should be given some lead time when a data series is being dropped; for example, when AMS dropped the Omaha cow price series. He was also concerned about AMS showing gaps of whole months in reporting data such as boneless rib-eye prices. He would rather deal with nominal quotes rather than no data at all. His next request was that the per capita consumption of meat data be on a boneless equivalent for all meats. The drops in per capita consumption of beef are not real because of additional trimming now being done.

He has a problem getting FAS revised historical series. He finished by saying that the hog data are tracking better now. He finds people in NASS and ERS very helpful and they go out of their way to work with him. He feels that there is a cyclical relationship between the pig crop and barrow and gilt slaughter. In 1992, people will say we are understating the pig crop.

**Jim Epstein - USDA/AMS**

AMS has a policy that it will not quote prices unless trades are taking place. He will talk to the people in Des Moines about hide and offal data.

**Charles Caudill - NASS**

He said that we would do some exploration with feedlots to see if they would be willing to report data for cattle being placed at 100-pound increments.

**Jim Epstein - USDA/AMS**

He made the point that as the cattle slaughter industry becomes more concentrated it is harder and harder to obtain voluntary reports. Voluntary reporting of prices for boxed beef needs to be looked at. An alternative would be to go to mandatory reporting but they are not anxious to do that now.

**Participants at Memphis, Tennessee Data Users Meetings  
March 12, 1991**

Susan Baldwin  
Cotton Outlook  
Memphis, Tennessee

Jess Barr  
National Cotton Council  
Memphis, Tennessee

Dian Berryman  
Merrill Lynch  
Memphis, Tennessee

David Brandon, Jr.  
Shearson Lehman Brothers  
Memphis, Tennessee

Kevin Brinkley  
National Cotton Council  
Memphis, Tennessee

Kevin Brown  
Soil Conservation Service  
Muscle Shoals, Alabama

Ray Bryant  
Lower Mississippi Delta Development Center  
Memphis, Tennessee

Kip Butts  
Hohenberg Bros. Company  
Memphis, Tennessee

Foy Campbell  
Delta & Pine Land Company  
Montgomery, Alabama

Steve Cheney  
Agricultural Marketing Service  
Montgomery, Alabama

Phil Coleman  
Shelby County Ag. Extension Service  
Memphis, Tennessee

Dean Ethridge  
Sparks Commodities Inc.  
Memphis, Tennessee

Don Frahm  
Sparks Commodities  
Memphis, Tennessee

Steven Gray  
Stahel America  
Memphis, Tennessee

Randy Griggs  
Alabama Peanut Producers  
Dothan, Alabama

Hosea Harkness  
Sparks Commodities  
Memphis, Tennessee

Keth Henley  
Cotton Outlook  
Memphis, Tennessee

Estel Hudson  
University of Tennessee  
Jackson, Tennessee

Mark Lange  
National Cotton Council  
Memphis, Tennessee

Tim Meeks  
TVA, Ag. Institute  
Muscle Shoals, Alabama

Broderick Parr  
Sparks Commodities  
Memphis, Tennessee

Trent Roberts  
Arkansas Soybean Association  
Little Rock, Arkansas

Brian Robinson  
Riceland Foods, Inc.  
Stuttgart, Arkansas

E. W. Buddy Sanders  
Shelby County Ag. Extension Service  
Memphis, Tennessee

Bill Simpson  
Farm Credit Services  
Bartlett, Tennessee

Surendra Singh  
Tennessee State University  
Nashville, Tennessee

Randy Smith  
Riceland Foods  
Stuttgart, Arkansas

Earl Stennis  
Agricultural Economics  
Mississippi State, Mississippi

John Van Dyke  
Agricultural Marketing Service  
Washington, D.C.

William H. Walker, III  
Agricenter International  
Memphis, Tennessee

Hugh Warren  
Catfish Farmers of America  
Indianola, Mississippi

Participants at Kansas City, Missouri Data Users Meetings  
March 14, 1991

Belinda Bird  
Agricultural Marketing Service  
St. Joseph, Missouri

Maury Brannon  
Union Equity  
Enid, Oklahoma

Gary Calfee  
Farmers Home Administration  
Columbia, Missouri

Bill Edwards  
Kansas Farm Bureau  
Manhattan, Kansas

Richard Fenwick  
Co Bank  
Denver, Colorado

Phil McFall  
Agricultural Marketing Service  
St. Joseph, Missouri

Richard Rudel  
University of Missouri  
Columbia, Missouri

J. N. Smith  
Southwest Missouri State University  
Springfield, Missouri



Participants at Washington, D.C. Data Users Meetings  
March 19, 1991

Ed Cissel  
Foreign Agricultural Service  
Washington, D.C.

Jerry Coffey  
Office of Management & Budget  
Washington, D.C.

Tim Courneya  
Northharvest Bean Growers  
Frazee, Minnesota

Jane Keffer  
Wallace & Edwards / ASCL  
Washington, D.C.

Duane Mergner  
North Dakota Edible Bean Council  
Arthur, North Dakota

Mark Sletten  
Northharvest Bean Growers  
Hatton, North Dakota

Fred Thorp  
Consultant  
Fairfax, Virginia

John Van Dyke  
Agricultural Marketing Service  
Washington, D.C.

John Wilson  
Ocean Spray Cranberries  
Lakeville, Massachusetts

**Participants at San Francisco, California Data Users Meetings  
April 11, 1991**

Ken Dulin  
J.G. Boswell Company  
Los Angeles, California

Mike Fitch  
Wells Fargo Bank  
Walnut Creek, California

Bill Isgrigg  
Washington Barley Commission  
Spokane, Washington

Tom Kearney  
Cooperative Extension  
Woodland, California

Bill Penney  
Associated Feed & Supply  
Turlock, California

Vijay Pradhan  
University of California  
Berkeley, California

Lowell Serfling  
Agricultural Marketing Service  
Portland, Oregon

Jerome Siebert  
University of California  
Berkeley, California

Joseph Smith  
Oilseeds International Ltd.  
San Francisco, California

Jim Trabulse  
Illustrated Forecasts  
San Francisco, California

Participants at Chicago, Illinois Data Users Meetings  
May 1, 1991

John A. Brandt  
Atwood-Larson Company  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Dave Burrows  
Crop Info Service  
Green Bay, Wisconsin

Ross Carstens  
Farmers Grain & Livestock  
West Des Moines, Iowa

Jim Epstein  
Agricultural Marketing Service  
Springfield, Illinois

Erick Gill  
Grand Nut/Pillsbury  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Jim Gill  
Illinois Farm Bureau  
Bloomington, Illinois

Bill Lapp  
ConAgra  
Omaha, Nebraska

Richard Loewy  
Ag. Resource Company  
Chicago, Illinois

Francois Maranda  
Statistics Canada  
Ottawa, Ontario

Tom Morgan  
Sterling Research Corporation  
Arlington Heights, Illinois

Ken Nye  
Michigan Farm Bureau  
Lansing, Michigan

John Otte  
Farm Progress Companies  
West Des Moines, Iowa

George Rivard  
Agricomp  
Bartlett, Illinois

Bernard Rosien  
Statistics Canada  
Ottawa, Ontario

Dick Smetana  
Continental Grain  
Chicago, Illinois

Kyle Stephens  
Iowa State University  
Ames, Iowa

Susan Sutherland  
Quaker Oats Company  
Chicago, Illinois

Mike Trant  
Statistics Canada  
Ottawa, Ontario

William Uhrig  
Purdue University  
West Lafayette, Indiana

Robert Wisner  
Iowa State University  
Ames, Iowa

Bob Zdanky  
Santa Fe Railroad  
Kansas City, Kansas

Dean Zyleger  
Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers  
Wausau, Wisconsin



## USDA HEADQUARTERS STAFF AT 1991 DATA USERS MEETINGS

<u>PERSON</u>	<u>AGENCY</u>	<u>MEETINGS ATTENDED 1/</u>
Andy Aaronson	World Agricultural Outlook Board	4
Rich Allen	National Agricultural Statistics Service	2, 3, 4
Gerald Bange	World Agricultural Outlook Board	3, 4
Russell Barlowe	World Agricultural Outlook Board	1
Charles Caudill	National Agricultural Statistics Service	1, 3, 5
James Donald	World Agricultural Outlook Board	1, 2, 5
Bruce Gardner	Assistant Secretary for Economics	3
Tony Grano	Economic Research Service	1, 2
Allen Johnson	Economic Research Service	1, 2, 5
Mack Leath	Economic Research Service	1, 2, 4
John Lee	Economic Research Service	3
Bob McElroy	Economic Research Service	1, 2
James Nix	World Agricultural Outlook Board	5
Joyce Pulliam	National Agricultural Statistics Service	3, 4
Gerald Rector	World Agricultural Outlook Board	2
Greg Strain	Economic Research Service	5
Fred Surls	Economic Research Service	3, 4
Larry Van Meir	Economic Research Service	3, 5
Fred Vogel	National Agricultural Statistics Service	1, 3, 4, 5
John Witzig	National Agricultural Statistics Service	1, 2, 3, 4, 5

1/ Meetings were: (1) Memphis, (2) Kansas City, (3) Washington, D.C., (4) San Francisco, (5) Chicago

# CALIFORNIA WHEAT COMMISSION

P.O. Box 2267  
Woodland, California 95695-2267  
Phone (916) 661-1292  
FAX (916) 661-1332

April 15, 1991

Charles E. Caudill, Administrator  
USDA NASS  
Room 4117 South Building  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Mr. Caudill:

Thank you for your invitation to attend the Data Users Meeting in San Francisco. Although the Commission was not able to send a representative, we would like to offer a few comments.

1. NASS and CASS are to be commended for the implementation of the reporting of planting intentions for Desert Durum in the January reporting period. This planting estimate is important for both the Southwest Desert Durum producers as well as the "spring" durum producers in the northern states.

2. The Objective Yield Survey for winter wheat was discontinued in California after 1989. This survey should be reinstated in some manner so that both annual yields and trends over years can be properly estimated. Yields in California vary widely between irrigated and non-irrigated production and from dry to normal to wet years.

3. The Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990, Section 2013(b) calls for "a survey of grain varieties commercially produced in the United States".

How will this survey be designed and implemented? How can the Commission comment regarding the survey design? When will the survey be conducted and when will it be repeated?

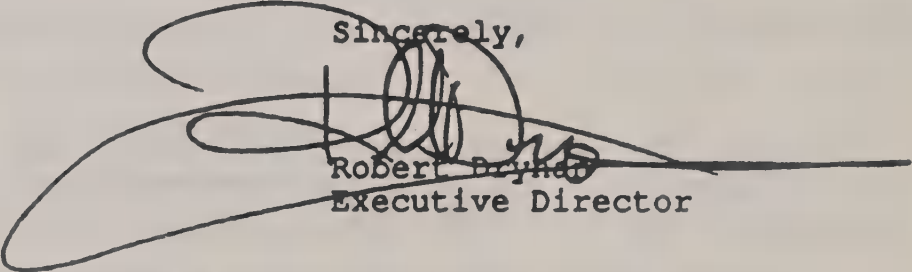
## CALIFORNIA WHEAT COMMISSION

Mr. Caudill  
Page 2  
April 15, 1991

Please add these comments to the proceedings. Can a copy of the proceedings be sent to the Commission?

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Robert Brynner  
Executive Director

RD:gr



Congressional Record-House  
October 22, 1990

CONFERENCE REPORT ON S. 2830, FOOD, AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION, AND  
TRADE ACT OF 1990 (begins on p.H11029)

[pH11193]

TITLE XX-GRAIN QUALITY

SEC. 2001. SHORT TITLE.

This title may be cited as the "Grain Quality Incentives Act of 1990".

SEC. 2013. SEED VARIETY INFORMATION AND SURVEY.

(a) INFORMATION.-

(1) IN GENERAL.-Grain submitted for public testing shall be evaluated for selected specific agronomic performance characteristics and intrinsic end-use performance characteristics, as determined by the Secretary, with the results of the evaluations made available to the Secretary.

(2) DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION.-The Secretary shall disseminate varietal performance information obtained under paragraph (1) to plant breeders, producers, and end users.

(b) SURVEY.-The Secretary shall periodically conduct, compile, and publish a survey of grain varieties commercially produced in the United States.

(c) ANALYSIS OF VARIETY SURVEY DATA.-The Secretary shall analyze the variety surveys conducted under subsection (b) in conjunction with available applied research information on intrinsic quality characteristics of the varieties, to evaluate general intrinsic crop quality characteristics and trends in production related to intrinsic quality characteristics. This information shall be disseminated as required by subsection (a)(2).

May 3, 1991

Mr. Robert Drynan  
Executive Director  
California Wheat Commission  
P.O. Box 2267  
Woodland, California 95695-2267

Dear Mr. Drynan:

Thank you for your April 15 letter addressing comments to the San Francisco Data Users proceedings. We will include your comments in our summary of the Data Users proceedings and send you a copy.

The three points you make are greatly appreciated, and I would like to take this opportunity to respond to each.

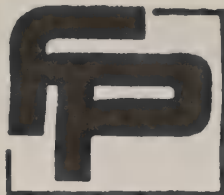
1. We were pleased to implement desert durum planting intentions in our January report, as well as early production estimates in the May and June 1990 Crop Production releases.
2. The Objective Yield Survey for winter wheat was discontinued in California after 1989 due to budget constraints. However, we do continue to survey California winter wheat producers for their acreage and production. We collect the irrigated and nonirrigated data separately to ensure proper weighting to an all winter wheat yield. This survey works very well. Without additional funds, the Objective Yield Survey in California will not be reinstated.
3. The 1990 Farm Bill, as you point out, directs the Secretary of Agriculture to periodically conduct, compile, and publish a survey of grain varieties commercially produced in the United States. Unfortunately, no funds were included in either our FY 1991 Budget or our FY 1992 Budget request for these surveys. We will again identify this data need in our FY 1993 Budget request. If funds are appropriated, the wheat variety survey is expected to be similar to the 1984 survey. In the meantime, any comments you may have on the variety survey design would be welcome.

Again, thank you for your comments. Our main motivation in conducting Data Users Meetings is to generate discussion between our staff and those using the data.

Sincerely,



CHARLES E. CAUDILL  
Administrator



## FARM PROGRESS COMPANIES

1501 42nd Street • Suite 501 • West Des Moines, IA 50265 • 515/224-6025

Charles Caudill, Administrator  
National Agricultural Statistics Service  
USDA South Building  
Washington, D.C. 20250

May 3, 1991

Dear Charles:

Some chance exists that I failed to communicate at the Data User's meeting in Chicago. I fear you may have interpreted my comments as "Otte finds NASS folks unresponsive to requests for information." That's not true. It's not the message I intended.

Readers often call us with questions on production figures, price data, policy issues, farm management or marketing concerns, credit terms, farm program provisions and regulations, or environmental issues. Most often we do not know the answer.

I'm trying to figure out how to match requests for information with which agency, individual, or institution is most likely to have the best answer. The list of Information Contacts in ERS and NASS helps considerably.

Sometimes where to look is obvious. Suppose the question is, "'How low did 1988 corn yields fall in the counties that border or corner on mine?'" The state statistics office should know. But suppose the question is, "I live in Arizona. I have farm land in Lee county Illinois. I'd like information on recent cash rent trends in that area, factors behind those shifts, and what would be a fair rent to charge this year?" The Illinois statistics office should have some figures. Economic Research Service has some analysis. The Illinois Extension Service might have a better feel for how developments are impacting current rental values.

I'd like to be able to respond to all such requests by saying: "Here's the answer." Or "I don't know. But so and so and such and such agency should know. Here's the phone number and address."

I'd like to steer folks on the shortest course possible to the best source available. In recent years I've directed some folks to Iowa Ag Statistics knowing full well your shop did not have the answers, but because your troops have demonstrated willingness to help folks find the answers.

Sincerely,

John Otte, Economics Editor



May 9, 1991

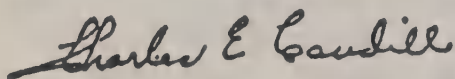
Mr. John Otte  
Economics Editor  
Farm Progress Companies  
1501 42nd Street, Suite 501  
West Des Moines, Iowa 50265

Dear Mr. Otte:

It is because of the difficulty people sometimes have matching their requests for information with the correct agency contact that I have fostered a NASS philosophy to answer all reasonable requests, even if they go beyond NASS data. I do not think you failed to communicate your concern at the Chicago Data Users Meeting. I just want to reaffirm that you can call on our State Statistical Offices for a variety of information needs.

Thanks for your useful input at the Data Users Meeting and your support for our agricultural statistics program. Since you are also in the information business, we share some common issues in serving the public. Please keep in touch.

Sincerely,



CHARLES E. CAUDILL  
Administrator



4023 North State Street  
Bismarck, ND 58501-0690 USA  
Phone: 701-224-3019  
FAX: 701-224-2798  
TWX: 910-677-2331 NATLSUNFL UD

Charles E. Caudill, Administrator  
National Agricultural statistics Service  
United States Department of Agriculture  
14th and Independence  
Washington, D.C. 20250-2000

Dear Mr. Caudill:

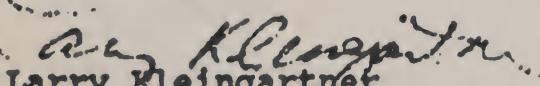
Thank you for your invitation to attend USDA's meetings on field crop reports. Unfortunately, I will not be able to attend either of the meetings. However, I would like to provide the following comments.

The National Sunflower Association (NSA) is already on record in support of adding other states as Nebraska and Colorado to the sunflower survey.

In addition, the NSA urges NASS to reinstate the 'objective yield survey' for sunflower. This was initiated in the middle eighties and proved to be quite accurate in determining pre-harvest sunflower yields. Apparently, due to cost, the objective yield survey was abandoned and NASS has since depended on farmer surveys for its October yield report. With that change there has been a significant annual difference in the October yield estimate compared to the final January yield report. A change greater than 10 percent in the two reports, which has generally been the case, can cause market disfunction.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment and the NSA would be pleased to respond to any questions or comments your staff might have.

Sincerely,

  
Larry Kleingartner  
Executive Director

May 22, 1991

Mr. Larry Kleingartner  
Executive Director  
National Sunflower Association  
4023 North State Street  
Bismarck, North Dakota 58501

Dear Mr. Kleingartner:

Thank you for your recent letter to Charles Caudill, Administrator, National Agricultural Statistics Service. Your letter has been included in the Data Users Meetings Summary. A copy of this summary will be sent to you as soon as it is published. Additional sunflower States and other minor oilseed crops estimates will be included in the 1991 Annual Crop Summary.

Enclosed is a copy of our sunflower production "track record." I agree that if funding were available, the objective yield survey would be useful. However, I believe that the main reason for the large difference between the October 1 forecast and the final is weather related. These differences would not necessarily be smaller if we had been conducting objective yield surveys in 1988, 1989, and 1990.

Sincerely,

FREDERIC A. VOGEL  
Director  
Estimates Division

Enclosure



**SUNFLOWER: PRODUCTION, 1975 TO DATE, U. S.  
COMPARISON OF FORECAST AND FINAL ESTIMATES**

----- PROD FORECAST AND FINAL EST : DEVIATIONS FROM FINAL EST -----			
YEAR :	:	:	:
:	OCT 1 :	FINAL :	OCT 1
-----			
:	THOUSAND POUNDS		
:			
1975 1/2		786,010	
1976 1/2		857,100	
1977 :		2,760,470	
1978 :	3,390,400	3,817,920	-427,520
1979 :	7,655,525	7,296,110	359,415
1980 :	4,163,200	3,741,640	421,560
1981 :	4,493,050	4,487,410	5,640
1982 :	5,446,440	5,332,820	113,640
1983 :	3,169,950	3,198,500	-28,550
1984 :	3,667,400	3,744,530	-77,130
:			
1985 :	3,362,880	3,153,020	209,860
1986 :	2,393,300	2,675,750	-282,450
1987 :	2,273,900	2,608,150	-334,250
1988 2/2	1,398,050	1,791,970	-393,920
1989 :	1,683,200	1,759,760	-76,560
1990 :	2,110,000	2,274,405	-164,405
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1/ ONLY INCLUDES MN, MO.

1977 - 1987 = MN, MO, SD, AND TX.

2/ 1988 FORWARD = KS, MN, MO, SD, AND TX.

SUNFLOWER - 6









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